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FITTING-IN: HOW FORMERLY INCARCERATED NEW YORK CITY
BLACK MEN DEFINE SUCCESS POST-PRISON

by

MIKA'IL DeVEAUX

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare
in satisfaction of dissertation requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

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Fitting-in: How Formerly Incarcerated New York City

Black Men Define Success Post-Prison

by

Mika'il DeVeaux

Advisor: Roderick J. Watts, Ph.D.

The problem of community reintegration emerged following the rise of the US prison population, which began in in the 1970s, disproportionately affecting US-born African American men. In this qualitative study, the researcher examined the perceptions of 17 formerly incarcerated New York City African American men to understand how they defined post-prison success after having been in the community at least three years in the wake of the era of mass (hyper) incarceration.

During the study, the researcher employed a constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) approach using data from semi-structured interviews to identify factors that enabled these African American men to make the social and psychological adjustments needed to get on with their lives post-release. Success, as defined by the men in the study, meant fitting-in to their home communities as if they had never been in prison. The findings of this study demonstrate that success is a construct inclusive of material, social, and psychological components. A number of themes emerged from the data that respondents attached importance to that the researcher linked to each component of success and subsequently related to the fitting-in process.

The eligibility requirements for this study, which limited participation to men who had been out of prison at least three years, restricted generalizability of the results and suggest that length of time since release likely influenced definitions of success. This dissertation concludes

proposing research to examine potentially influencing issues related to time upon definitions of success, post-prison achievements, and the psychological effects of the incarceration experience and its relationship to African American men's post-prison experiences. These findings can enhance social work practice with justice-involved African American men, enable social workers to better understand this population, and encourage the development of additional methods to address the psychological challenges related to post-prison adjustment likely to contribute to their well-being.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Community Reintegration: An Emerging Social Problem

Punishment policies of the mid-1970s evidenced little attention to community reintegration (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis, 2002). In the decades following the 1970s and the sentencing policies that fueled incarceration, states' prison populations grew 708% (The Public Safety Performance Project, 2010); the federal prison population increased every year between 2000 and 2009 from 145,416 to 208,118, averaging 4.1% each year (West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010). Similarly, among those in local county and city jails, people in jails rose some 24% between 2000 and 2009 from 621, 149 to 767,620, representing, on average, a 3% increase each year since 2000 (Minton, 2010). These trends show dramatic increases in the size of the incarcerated population in a relatively short period.

Prior to the era of mass incarceration when the numbers in prison included only a few hundred thousand and the numbers released each year totaled no more than a few thousand, issues regarding reentry received little public attention and presented few challenges to the communities where those released returned (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). In contrast, since the start of the 21st century, an unprecedented number of people are released from prison at much higher rates (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006), making reentry a social problem that may no longer be ignored.

The growth of the prison population beginning in the 1970s resulted in a large population of people who had been incarcerated returning to the community after they served their terms, from 142,033 in 1978 to 637, 411 in 2012 (Carson & Golinelli, 2013). In 2009, 1,998 people returned to the community from state or federal prison every day; this number does not include those released from county or city jails. Given the rates at which people were are released from

prison, some 7 million people would be returning from prison in the coming decades (Gideon, 2011). Moreover, the demographic characteristics of the incarcerated population suggest that a large proportion of those released are poor men of color from a relatively small number of inner-city communities (Carson, 2015; Wacquant, 2010a). This research focuses on the reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated men who self-identify as African American born in the United States and who live in the New York City area.

Petersilia (2004, p. 5) defines reentry as “all the activities and programming conducted to prepare ex-convicts to return safely to the community and to live as law abiding citizens (including) time during confinement, the process by which they are released, and how they are supervised after released.” In general, at least 95% of all people incarcerated in state or federal facilities return to the community, most under parole supervision (Hughes & Wilson, 2003). Parole is the release from prison following serving a portion of the maximum term of a sentence and includes federal or state monitoring. Parole release is linked to receipt of an indeterminate sentence, a range of time rather than a set time to be imprisoned, established by judges at the time of sentencing (Bosworth, 2005).

People who reenter the community following long periods of incarceration face many challenges. Research indicates that those returning from prison often return in the same or in a worsened condition than they were before entering prison. They are likely to have few marketable skills and are difficult to employ. Some suffer from mental disorders. A portion of people in prison are HIV positive, have confirmed AIDS, or have other health problems (Freudenberg, Daniels, Crum, Perkins, & Richie, 2008; Maruscha, 2010). Moreover, among people returning from prison and jail, very few have positive social supports. Once released, they have high rates of death by suicide, homicide, or overdose from drug use (Binswanger, et

al., 2011; Binswanger, et al., 2007; Lim, et al., 2012). Finally, when people do return from prison or jail, they tend to be concentrated in areas that are characteristically impoverished and provide little economic opportunity; in addition, as many as three in ten are likely to become homeless (Bernstein, 2011; Cnaan, Draine, Frazier, & Sinha, 2008; Geller & Curtis, 2011; La Vigne, Cowan & Brazzell, 2006; Paquette, 2011).

Research indicates that people released from prison are likely to return within a few years. Nationally, three in ten formerly incarcerated people recidivate within six months of their release, increasing to two out of three within three years after release; three of four within five. (Durose, Cooper & Snyder, 2014). More than half are returned to prison within this critical period. Rates of recidivism are likely to vary from state to state and study to study because of different measures employed (Castillo, et al., 2004) or because the measures are *ad hoc* in nature (Malts, 1984). Recidivism is the primary outcome measure of incarceration and is assessed on a number of factors: post-prison arrest, violations of conditions of release, new convictions or incarceration (Lyman & Lobelia, 2007; Mayfield, 2004; Wormith, Althouse, Simpson, Reitzel, Fagan, & Morgan, 2007). Post-release incarceration often follows the violation of conditions of release or the commission of crime. However, either scenario has a negative impact on public safety (Carter, Gibe, Gigue & Striker, 2007; Hughes & Wilson, 2003; Langan & Levin, 2002). Reports issued by the New York State's Department of Correction show that the return to prison rate for those released from New York State's prisons has been relatively consistent in recent years. Between 1985 and 2008, an average of 41% of those released have been returned to prison following release; nearly two of three were returned for violating the conditions of their release, and more than a third incarcerated for new crimes (Kim, 2012).

Background to the Problem: The Era of Mass (Hyper) Incarceration

Increases in crime, arrest, conviction, incarceration rates and the lengthening of prison terms beginning in the early 1970s peaked as the twentieth century ended (Blumstein & Beck, 2000; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012; Maguire, 2008; Mauer, 2001). This began the period described by some as the mass incarceration of American citizens, so that by 2001 the US imprisons more people per 100,000 than any other country in the world including China (Garland, 2001b; Walmsley, 2011). During this same period, incarceration became the primary method to address fears related to the perception of widespread crime (Beckett & Sasson, 2004). Public officials devised policies that pursued punishment for those convicted of wrongdoing in response to crime or the perception of crime, and as part of revanchist post-civil rights era strategies that were mainly experienced by people of color (Wacquant, 2010a; Covington, 2010; Simon, 2007). In its wake, the prison population changed from mostly White incarcerates to more than two-thirds non-White as the twenty-first century began (Miller, 2013; Wacquant, 2010a). Wacquant (2010a) characterizes the era as one of *hyper-incarceration* rather than mass incarceration because African Americans living in impoverished urban communities were acutely targeted, while middle and upper class Americans of all other ethnic or racial groups were left intact (Western & Wildeman, 2008). Cooper (2011) includes gender in this analysis because men of color are acutely targeted compared to others and because contemporary penal policies increased the rate at which women of color were incarcerated compared to other women.

The notion of hyper-incarceration runs counter to previous descriptions of the era that emphasize the increase in the rate of incarceration and the growth of the prison population post-1970 alone (Cooper, 2011; Garland, 2001b; Goldson, 2005; Simon 2000). Wacquant's (2010a) characterization sheds light on the disproportionate rates of incarceration and makes more

relevant the need to single out African American men and their experiences as the foci of this analysis in light of the failure of others to detail the experiences of poor urban African American men when reviewing the impact of incarceration policies. The notion of mass incarceration obscures the role of race, ignores inequalities and suggests equal widespread effect of incarceration policies; clearly this is not the case.

The historical and cultural tendency of criminalizing men of color, particularly Black men, imbedded in the present era of hyper-incarceration began long before the 1970s (Alexander, 2010; Blackmon, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Miller, 2013; Muhammad, 2010; Raza, 2011; Wacquant, 2010a). At the dawn of American slavery, Biblical references were used to rationalize the enslavement of Africans, simultaneously perpetuating the myth of black inferiority, and promoting White supremacy (Covington, 2010; Burris-Kitchen & Burris, 2011). In general, dominant groups tend to criminalize, demonize, and or “other” those not in the dominant group. Marginalized people are stigmatized and stereotyped as part of a broader strategy to control and marginalize these groups (Mullaly, 2010). As divisions are fostered, for example, along class, sex and racial lines, they tend to create an *us and them*, or wedge between those with power and those who lack it. Those lacking power, because they are the enemies of the status quo, are likely to be subjects of abuse, exploitation, and oppression to maintain positions of domination by those possessing power (Covington, 2010; Silliman, Bhattacharjee, & Davis, 2002). Similarly, LGBT people in the United States have been targets for criminalization in this manner (Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock 2011) as have people with a mental illness, both of whom have increasingly been subjected to police surveillance and, for the latter, are more frequently found in prison rather than mental health systems (Teplin, 1984; Torrey, Eslinger,

Lamb, & Pavle, 2010; Torrey, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (U.S.), & Public Citizen Health Research Group, 2002).

Referencing a master-slave paradigm, Mullaly (2010) and others (Cooper, 2013) suggest that stigma and the accompanying internalization of the demonized mark or status serves to reinforce practices of oppression in those posing as the master class and an acceptance of inferiority by those oppressed. In the case of the criminal justice system, once transformed into a convict, the person so marked is made to endure a new social construction that segregates and disempowers. Over an extended period, this relationship appears natural and normal and becomes difficult to unravel, particularly when it gains *legal* support (Cooper, 2013).

The Thirteenth Amendment of the US Constitution legitimized the newly freed poor African Americans as targets for incarceration by declaring that “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction” (Burriss-Kitchen & Burriss, 2011; Christianson, 1998, p. 169; National Archives, 2013; Raza, 2011). Although there had been a fundamental change in the law which previously permitted slavery, southern Whites were not ready to change the master slave social relationship they previously held with now freed African American who defined what it meant to be white (Blackmon, 2009). Being white meant to be superior to those previously held in bondage who were not deemed as human. Nineteenth century social scientists provided justification for the continued failure to recognize African Americans as humans and for their racial criminalization by referencing “the peculiarities of nature which belong to the Negroes as a race” and their “crime-stained blackness” (Muhammad, 2010, p. 13, 16-17, 20). In addition, analyses of statistical data from 1870, 1880, and 1890 census reports were also used, along with the Uniform Crime Reports first

developed in the 1930s (Blackmon 2009; Covington, 2010; Muhammad, 2010) for this same purpose.

Scholars have further documented the construction of black deviance in the postbellum south, the civil laws (Black Codes and Vagrancy Laws) written in response to perceived black criminality, and use of the media to ensure both message and image were clear (Blackmon, 2009; Covington, 2010; Miller, 2013; Stewart, 1998). As Miller (2013) reported, freedmen were incarcerated under southern vagrancy laws for refusal to work as sharecroppers on the plantations from which they had been freed and for a number of other pretenses. These laws were later replicated in other parts of the United States, and when implemented, drastically changed the prison demographics of states and other localities during that time (Blackmon, 2009; Christianson, 1998; Miller, 2013; Oshinsky, 1997). The Black Codes, Vagrancy Laws, Pig Laws, and others, *a la* the 13th Amendment and media messages established the color of crime. These *laws* were designed for and used specifically against African Americans (Blackmon, 2009; Cohen, 1976; Covington, 2010; Miller, 2013; Raza, 2011; Stewart, 1998). Raza (2011) argued that these laws were also designed to control, subjugate, and relegate freed Blacks to the low end of the social ladder. Moreover, these laws were among a “host of extralegal and illegal practices” designed to facilitate the incarceration of African Americans for slave-like work, convict leasing, forced labor, and other forms of exploitation in an attempt to make up for the lost economic benefits of free labor enjoyed during slavery post-Emancipation Proclamation (Blackmon, 2009; Burris-Kitchen & Burris, 2011; Christianson, 1998; Cohen, 1976, p. 34; Oshinsky, 1997; Raza, 2011; Stewart, 1998). Miller explained explains that during these times a “conviction as a vagrant meant lengthy terms of imprisonment under the chain gangs and convict leasing system. As a result, by the end of the 19th century, Blacks comprised more than 90

percent of the convict leasing system in a still agricultural but industrializing south” (2013, p. 578).

Some scholars argue that the criminal justice system serves the same purpose as those older laws and controls did so long ago (Johnson, 2011; Wacquant, 2002). Despite the continued disproportionate incarceration of African Americans, contemporary criminologists provide justifications for imprisonment that include retribution, incapacitation, general and specific deterrence, and rehabilitation of those convicted of a crime (Bedau & Kelly, 2010; Benavie, 2009; Dillof, 2011; Gromet & Darley, 2009; Wacquant, 2002; Weisberg, 2012).

Changes in imprisonment objectives. In the decades before the 1970s, the rehabilitation of people convicted of crime was the dominant objective of imprisonment, not punishment (Garland, 2001b). People sent to prison received recreational, educational, vocational programs, and therapeutic activities to aid their rehabilitation (Carlson, Roth & Travisano, 2008; Kann, 2005; Pollock, 2006). However, the 1960s ended with a rejection of the rehabilitation model and growing discontent with this approach and, along with the growth in the prison population, the beginning of an era ushering in a return to incapacitation, retributivism, and increased punishment (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Carlson, et al, 2008; Pollock, 2006). This shift followed the belief that rehabilitation programs had failed to rehabilitate or improve people in prison. This view was based, in large part, upon New York sociologist and criminologist Robert Martinson and colleagues’ report entitled *The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Valuation Studies* (Lipton, Martinson & Wilks, 1975). Martinson’s (1974) report summarized publications focused on recidivism and warned of the varying meanings associated with success and failure in the 231 studies he and his colleagues reviewed. The report (emphasis added) concluded that “*With few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been*

reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism” (Martinson, 1974, p. 25). The failed programs included analyses of education and vocational training, individual and group counseling, “milieu therapy” (the inclusion of a rehabilitative or treatment atmosphere throughout the entire prison environment), medical treatment for those committing drug, sex and other crimes, and a number of other strategies and treatments designed to improve people in prison (Martinson, 1974).

Consequently, the 1970s was the beginning of a “tough on crime” approach to control criminal behavior to ensure that punishment, in the eyes of its proponents, was commensurate with crime (von Hirsch, 1976, 1996). Some researchers have suggested that the increased reliance on incarceration as an instrument of control, and other changes toward more punitive crime control approaches, grew out of political efforts to counter gains made by African Americans during the Civil Rights Era (Alexander, 2010; Beckett & Sasson, 2008; Beckett & Sasson, 2004; Loury, 2007). Moreover, these controls generally furthered the disproportionate imprisonment of Black men (Mauer & King, 2007; Pettit & Western, 2004; Tonry, 1994). However, researchers have identified several possible influences that generally linked with the changes in attitude and policy during this time. Examples include an assumed rise in crime; extensive media coverage that dramatized crime (Tonry, 1999); public demand and anger about crime; politicians using crime issues to gain support for their careers (Matthews, 2005; Tonry, 1999); changes in the political environment (Yates & Fording, 2005); criminalizing racial discord of previous decades (Loury, 2007); and others (Caplow & Simon, 1999; Feeley & Simon, 1992; Mauer, 2001). None of these changes were forward-looking or took into consideration consequences of those changes, and were not contingent upon recidivism rates post-prison. Moreover, the three national studies tracking people released from prison in 1983, a

group release in 1994, and among those released in 2005, show similar rates of recidivism after three years as defined during those times: 62.5 % recidivated among those released in 1983, 67.5% among those released in 1994, and 67.8% of those released in 2005 (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014; Langan & Levin, 2002; Beck & Shipley, 1989). Those released in 2005 were also tracked over a five-year period. That data also showed that three in four (76.6%) recidivate within five years of release (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014). As already noted, in New York State recidivism rates were virtually unchanged between 1985 and 2008 (Kim, 2012).

In addition to the get tough rhetoric, literature suggests that the 1970s-era coincided with a revised version of racialized crime and crime control policies reminiscent of those that began after emancipation and continued more than a 100 years later (Alexander, 2010; Blackmon, 2009; Muhammad, 2010; Nixon, et al., 2008; Wacquant, 2002; Western, 2004; Western, 2007). Although people of color have traditionally been more affected by US crime control efforts, by the 21st century the percentage of incarcerated people of color (non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics of any origin) in the US was grossly disproportionate compared to the percentages of people of color described in the US census data (Warde, 2013). African Americans and Hispanics combined made up 21% of the population in 1990 and about 25% by 2000 (Evan, Price, & Barron, 2001; Franklin, Villamil, & Bryant, 1992; Pollock, 2006; Tonry, 1994). Data as of 2013 makd up about 29% of the population, while among all people confined to a state or federal prison, two out of three were are persons of color. Warde (2013, p. 461, 462) notes that Black men, “only 6 % of the population, . . . accounted for 28 % of all arrests and 40 % of all men held in prison and jail in 2008 . . . [and] comprised 9 % of those men who were on either probation or parole” in the same year. Moreover, incarceration rates for non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic male and female adults of all ages have consistently outpaced their White counterparts

(Carson & Sabol, 2012; Garland, Spohn & Wodahl, 2008; Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2011; Sabol, West & Cooper, 2010; Warde, 2013). Research suggests that changes in sentencing strategies introduced decades earlier contributed to this trend (Clear & Austin, 2009; Drucker, 2002; Mauer, 2001).

Changing sentencing strategies. Sentencing strategies are policy approaches that often reflect shifts in ideological and political perspectives for correctional goals. Changes in sentencing strategies linked to increases in incarceration have also resulted in longer stays in prison for every type of crime. These changes are important to note given claims that incarceration has effects on health, particularly after release (Schnittker & John, 2007), is likely to truncate psychosocial development (Dmitrieva, Monahan, Cauffman, & Steinberg, 2012), and that the resultant psychological effects of incarceration are likely to manifest post release (Haney, 2003; Herman, 1992; Schnittker & John, 2007). Moreover, prolonged harsh prison conditions believed to be traumatic have been linked with Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Disorders of extreme stress (DESNOS), Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD), and adjustment disorder, and are not likely to lead to positive post-release outcomes (Chen & Shapiro, 2007). During the 1970s, the previously universal indeterminate sentencing model, model – a range rather than a specified period, gave way to determinate sentencing. This approach gained wide support fueled by rhetoric expressive of a conservative crime agenda calling for “just deserts” and “truth in sentencing” (Berman, 2005; Griset, 1991; Griset, 1999; Hamm, 1989; Segall, 2010; Seghetti & Smith, 2007). Mandatory sentencing also suggested an ideological policy shift from rehabilitation to a punitive approach to criminal behavior (Roberts, 2003; Tonry, 2006).). Mandatory sentencing took various forms, most notably as mandatory minimum sentences and “three strikes you’re out” laws. These policies resulted in longer prison

sentences for a number of people convicted of crime, including those convicted of crimes for the first time (Mays & Winfree, 2009). On the federal level, changes in sentencing policies culminated in the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984, which was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. The law effectively limited use of indeterminate sentencing and parole. It led to longer prison terms and contributed to the rise in the federal prison population (Gorman, 2010; Stith & Koh, 1993).

The Nation's "war on drugs" also contributed to the mass incarceration of US citizens and the hyper-incarceration of people of color. The war was part of the tough on crime approach that had both political and racial undertones. Those convicted of a drug offense were sentenced to prison terms longer than those meted out for rape and weapons offenses; the large majority of those receiving these sentences for drug offenses were people of color (Alexander, 2010; Benavie, 2009). The total number of people confined in a jail or prison around the country for drug offenses between 1980 and 2010 increased from 41,000 to 507,000 (Sentencing Project, 2012). It seems probable that State policies reflected national trends; policies changes in New York State during this same period mirrored those enacted on the national level (New York State Commission on Sentencing Reform, 2009).

Between 1931 and 1962, New York State's under custody population increased from 12,000 to 19,000 (New York State Assembly's Committee on Ways & Means, 1998). It hovered around the 1962 level until 1972. In 1973, the New York State Legislature under the leadership of then Governor Nelson Rockefeller enacted the Rockefeller Drug Laws. For the first time, people convicted of drug offenses were sentenced to a minimum of 15 years for the sale or possession of two ounces of a variety of controlled substances (New York State Commission on Sentencing Reform, 2009). Violators of some drug offences were given sentences with life

terms. In addition, limitations were placed on plea-bargaining, or a negotiation between the accused, the prosecution, and the judge to settle a criminal case when people arrested for these crimes acknowledged guilt and opted not to adjudicate their cases before a jury. The Rockefeller Drug Laws are blamed, in part, for mandatory minimum sentences and a significant increase in New York State's prison population (Drucker, 2002; Glasser, 2000; Mauer, 2001; Schlosser, 1998; Wilson, 2000). As a result of these laws, the State's incarceration rates per 100,000 increased from 120 in 1979 to 400 per 100,000 in 1999 (Maguire, 2012; Pastore & Maguire, 2000) and the prison population more than tripled during that same period, peaking at over 72,000 by 1999 (Beck & Harrison, 2001). Sentencing reforms enacted by New York in 1995 also contributed to the prison bulge (New York State Commission on Sentencing Reform, 2009).

Punitive approaches to criminal offenses continued in New York in later decades under other administrations. The Sentencing Reform Act of 1995 enacted by the New York Legislature was signed into law by Governor George Pataki in his first year of office (NYS Assembly's Committee on Ways and Means, 1998; NYS Commission on Sentencing Reform, 2009). The measure called for stiffer sentences for persons convicted of violent offenses and included the requirement that people convicted of violent crimes spend at least 85% of their sentences confined to a state prison. In some instances, the minimum time served for violent crimes defined under old State statutes doubled. Before the law's passage, a little more than a third of those convicted of a violent offense received sentences of at least ten years; after its passage, all those convicted of violent offenses received sentences of ten years or more (New York State Commission on Sentencing Reform, 2009).

Mental health consequences of harsh prison policies. During the era of hyper-incarceration, the increased use of solitary confinement, longer sentences, and the decrease in

rehabilitation services were contemporary symbols that the conditions in which people were incarcerated had worsened as a result of a punitive approach to criminal offending (Pizarro & Stenius, 2004; Pizarro, Stenius & Pratt, 2006). The prisons had become little more than human warehouses, which had deleterious effects upon people who were incarcerated. Evidence about the negative effects of incarceration on the psychological well-being of otherwise mentally sound individuals has been well-documented (Haney & Zimbardo, 1998; Kaye, 2008; Zimbardo, 1973). The prison experience is neither normal nor natural. It is among the most degrading experiences a person might endure (Kling, 1941). Some studies suggest that people in prison experience mental deterioration and apathy, endure personality changes, and become uncertain about their identities (Rhodes, 2005). A number of researchers have found that people in prison may be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorders and other psychiatric disorders, such as panic attacks, depression, and paranoia (Geaney, 2008; Grounds, 2004). Subsequently, once released, former incarcerates are likely to find social adjustment and social integration difficult, difficult primarily because of a lack of mental health services to address their unique experiences (Ground & Jamieson, 2003). Others have found that the incarceration experience promotes a sense of helplessness, greater dependence, introversion, and impairs one's decision-making ability (Schill & Marcus, 1998). The psychological suffering is compounded by experiencing or witnessing violence, both of which are common during incarceration (Listwan, Colvin, Hanley & Flannery, 2010; Morgan, 2009; Patrick, 1998; Pollock, 2006; Trammel, 2006). Some researchers assert that the psychological effects of incarceration developed during confinement are likely to endure for some time following release (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2003; Kling 1941).

Rationale for the Study

This qualitative study was initiated for a variety of reasons. Although some efforts are underway to enhance prisoner reentry by bettering in-prison and post-prison programs (Buford & Bergeron, 2006; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005; Petersilia, 2004; Seiter & Kadela, 2003), neither the effectiveness of these programs nor the determinants of successful reentry are well understood. Even the notions of *success* researcher's use are primitive; most use recidivism as the principle outcome variable without considering constructs from the social sciences or what those reentering the community want for themselves. In other words, there is little research evidence that consistently suggests what variables are associated with remaining in the community. What is lacking are agreed-upon notions and indicators of positive post-release outcomes and an appreciation of the complexity of the post-release challenges and the web of service providers that include substance abuse, sex crimes, post-prison service providers including mental health service providers, faith-based initiatives, and others (Wormith, et al., 2007). For example, an interim theory would need to incorporate elements of the in-prison experience (length of confinement, perceptions of the experience, programming or training, etc.), community adjustment post-release (social supports, parole experience, employment and housing opportunities, physical and mental health, substance abuse, etc.) as well as any number of interrelated psychological factors that may be related to the lived experiences.

The large number of people returning to prison following release suggests that most exiting prison are ill prepared to reenter society and that the often toxic communities they return to, and to some extent, the larger community, are ill prepared and ill equipped to receive them (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Rose & Clear, 2003; Stahler, Mennis, Belenko, Welsh, Hiller, & Zajac, 2013). The characteristics of the released population mirror the demographic characteristics of the incarcerated population; the largest proportion of those released are people

of color. Research shows that rates of failure vary by race and that the rate of failure is higher among people of color compared to Whites (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014). The failure of Black men to successfully reintegrate in their home communities has an impact on the families and communities receiving them (Marlow & Chesla, 2009). When large numbers of a community are cycling in and out of correctional facilities and carrying with them the lasting consequences of incarceration, these factors tend to further destabilize the community and further weaken already fragile families (Kubrin, Squires & Stewart, 2007). Moreover, a failure to successfully reintegrate also compromises public safety, as some reentrants return to crime (Pew Center on the States, 2011). For these, “ ‘reentry’ into society would be more accurately described as (a) prelude to another entry into the prison” (Wacquant, 2010b, p. 611). A return to crime includes varying cost to the victims of crime as well as the additional cost of policing and prosecution. In addition, failed reentry results in added cost for states that already spend billions of dollars on correctional budgets (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2013).

Clearly, additional research that may unearth predictors of successful community reintegration would help inform alternative strategies and policies designed to address the return of people from prison, both while they are in prison and at post-release, particularly as it relates to Black men returning to their communities and retarding the trends noted above. Few empirical studies of any sort have evaluated predictors of successful reentry overall, and even less is known about the meaning of successful reentry from the perspective of formerly incarcerated people who should be viewed as stakeholders in the process. Moreover, even fewer studies, if any, make this examination from the perspective of former Black incarcerates returned to an urban setting (Trimbur, 2009). There is little evidence of any effort to address the

psychological effects of incarceration such as trauma or of the affective aspects of the post-release experience in general or among African American men. As a result, there is little known about the psychological characteristics of successful reentrants in general or of incarcerated Black men in particular. Simply put, the experience of incarceration has received little attention from the perspective of those who have spent time in prison (Mbuba, 2012), nor has research including that experience been related to post release outcomes of former incarcerates of African descent living in an urban environment.

This study was conducted in New York City and included US born Black men who self-identify as African American who have not returned to prison for at least three years – after this time frame two thirds return to prison - in an effort to bridge some of the gaps in the literature and to give voice to this group. The objective is to develop a theoretical understanding of success post-release or successful reentry that expands the knowledge of successful reentry in relation to recidivism rates. The issues raised here suggest that employing a qualitative methodology would best aid in efforts to identify and describe those aspects of the post-prison experiences that might contribute to a theory of positive community reintegration. Future researchers wishing to increase their knowledge about post-release outcomes among Black men will gain insights from this study.

Statement of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore and describe the experiences that New York City Black men released from prison have of their post-release experiences in the community after having been in the community at least three years. The goal of this study is to gain insight from the experiential knowledge of formerly incarcerated people. Factors are identified that enable Black men who make the social and psychological adjustments needed to get on with

their lives post-release. A recounting of these experiences may inform policy discussions and reviews related to intervention alternatives for Black men currently incarcerated and those released. Moreover, the study offers social work scholars and practitioners insights that will enable them to better understand this population and foster a development of additional methods to address the psychological challenges related to post-prison adjustment likely to contribute to their well-being post-release. In addition, insights may be gained on how in-prison programming might contribute in some way to successful reintegration.

The following research questions were designed to obtain a better understanding of the post-release experience of Black men who have remained outside of prison for three or more years are:

1. How do they define success after prison?
2. What were their post-prison experiences pursuing success as they define it?
3. In the men's experience, how and in what ways did in-prison experiences shape their pursuit of success post-release?

The final questions emerge from a review of literature on mental health discussed below, so they are exploratory. These questions relate to well-being post-release and what well-being means for former incarcerates. More specifically, they relate to how formerly incarcerated US-born Black men understand and define well-being, to the ways they achieve it, the coping strategies employed to maintain positive well-being or what they believe they need to achieve it. Answers to these questions may provide important insights related to the long term objectives of this study.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins with a discussion of the historical context of Black male incarceration, including the context out of which the contemporary US penal system emerged. It documents the increased emphasis on punitive policies for those convicted of crime in the US that subsequently fueled mass incarceration and the ensuing problem of reentry. The review includes a historical context from which to examine the theoretical meaning and the theoretical justifications for punishment. A discussion of the psychological impact of the prison and post-release experiences add to the review of a number of barriers to a successful reentry. The chapter concludes with an empirical review of select programs that aim to reduce recidivism and regard this approach as the indicator of program success. The researcher offers a rationale for giving attention to an alternative perspective.

Historical Context of Black Male Incarceration

The rise in the number of people in US prisons has been well documented along with a myriad of links to what is now called the carceral state (Alexander, 2010; Beckett & Sasson, 2008; Beckett & Sasson, 2004; Benavie, 2009; Cole, 2011; Loury, 2007; Mauer & King, 2007; Pettit & Western, 2004; Tonry, 1994; Tonry, 1999). Despite the number of varying explanations for its establishment, Marie Gottschalk (2008, p. 237) observed that “many of them do have one thing in common. They adopt a relatively short time frame as they focus on trying to identify what changed in the United States since the 1960s to disrupt its generally stable and unexceptional incarceration rate . . .” However, research related to incarceration trends suggest that this is not a new development. In addition, there is a body of literature suggesting that the incarceration of black men at disproportionate rates is a long-standing practice as well (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Cahalan, 1979).

An examination of incarceration rates prior to contemporary well-known trends suggest that the 1880s marked an “increased use of incarceration, . . . [e]xtensive prison construction, organization of police forces, and increased formalization of criminal legislation and litigation processes” that began some fifty years prior (Cahalan, 1979, p. 11). Data amassed by Cahalan (1979) suggest that US incarceration rates for all adults and juveniles confined in state, federal prisons, reformatories, juvenile correctional facilities, jails, and similar facilities increased from 138 per 100,000 in 1880 to 213 per 100,000 in 1970. These figures likely underreport the actual numbers since those reported do not include people incarcerated in military prisons, mental hospitals or other prisons. Even so, the number of people confined in these facilities during this period increased sixfold from an estimated 81,000 in 1880 to an estimated 512,000 in 1970 (Cahalan, 1979). Cahalan’s findings also suggest that the percentage of mostly black men incarcerated since 1880s has consistently more than doubled the percent of Blacks within the US population, ranging from 28.6% incarcerated compared to 13.1% of the US population in 1880 to 40.7% incarcerated to 11.1% of the US population in 1970. Prior to the 1880s, European immigrants were the largest percentage among the incarcerated. Before this time, US born Blacks had been held in bondage.

While some scholars suggest that “the United States did not end up with the carceral state merely because [of] racial cleavages (Gottschalk, 2008, p. 239) others do (Alexander, 2010; Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Davis & Freeman, 2010; Hallett, 2004; Mauer, 2004; Wacquant, 2001), and link the foundation of the system of incarceration and related policies to the US Constitution:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction (Thirteenth Amendment, US Constitution).

Hallett (2004, p. 51) reports that it was the ‘convict lease system’ based on the Thirteenth Amendment of the US Constitution, which permitted involuntary servitude to resume immediately after the end of slavery. As a result, particularly in the South, there had been radical change in the racial demographics of the prison population. He describes how counties with a preponderance of Black people fed the state’s prisons with an ample supply of free labor. These efforts gained wide support to control and punish what may be said to be the first American “‘black crime problem’ . . . [w]ith total disregard for the economically destitute position in which freed slaves found themselves after the war . . . trying to feed themselves and looking for shelter” (Hallett, 2004, p. 53; Wacquant, 2001). As is now well known, these efforts were codified by a series of Black Codes that criminalize a range of behaviors that “only Black people could be duly convicted” (Blackmon, 2009; Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Davis, 2010, p. 28; Muhammad, 2010; Wacquant, 2002).

Overall, policies that racialized crime or the criminalization of Blackness prior to the commission of crime have implications for the post release experiences of Black men. Social environments polarized by race undermine successful integration post-release as well. Punitive policies have given rise to the acceptance of punishment while in prison, and the direct and collateral consequences of being formally incarcerated. In all, these have exacerbated a negative post-release experience, particularly that of Black men (Heitzeg, 2009; Mauer, 2002; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002, Miller, 2011; Miller & Spillane, 2012; Visher & Travis, 2011; Travis, 2002). Garland and his colleagues (2008, p. 13 - 14) have noted that “(t)his is an especially

salient issue for Blacks given the exclusions and limitations they have encountered historically in (the United States, making it) hard to deny that racial disparity in imprisonment poses a serious threat to the perception and reality of the full integration of Blacks into American society.” The past is now the present, where slaves laws have become Black Codes, plantations have become prisons, slave labor has become prison labor, and the criminal justice system and all that it entails is a system of crime control “without ever referring to race” (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008, p.633).

Theories of Punishment

Historical Background

Historical records dating as far back as 2000 BCE, including references in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, the Qur’an and traditional Islamic text and (various Ahadith collections), make mention of the existence of prisons and dungeons where people were held for later punishment. Records show that they were also places where people were confined as punishment (Anthony, 2009; Bosworth, 2005; Butler, 1991; Johnston, 2009). Although prisons existed in England as early as the 1300s, the founders of the US did not use prison as a crime fighting tool early in the nation’s history (McShane & Williams, 1996). While still an English colony, persons convicted of crimes in the US were commonly used as indentured servants, most having been deported from England for such purposes. In the 1600s, the penal ideology of US Colonist resembled that of the English (Blomberg & Lucken, 2010; Carlson, Roth & Trivisono, 2008; Perkinson, 2010). During these early years, rather than imposing lengthy prison sentences, and certainly not for the rehabilitation of those convicted of a crime, throughout the colonies violators of the law regularly endured publicly administered physical punishments (Blomberg & Lucken, 2010; Rothman, 1995).

Punishments in the colonies were designed to be a deterrent to criminal activity. It was purposely harsh and immediate, but did not include long periods of confinement (Meskell, 1999). The early colonists viewed crime as inevitable and were under no illusion that it could be eliminated from society (Rothman, 1995). Early colonial law, exemplified by the legal system developed in Pennsylvania, included provisions for hard labor and religious instruction as the primary means of reforming the errant.

Progressing into the 1700s and 1800s, prisons in the US became the dominant method to transform wayward people into law-abiding citizens and to teach them obedience. People in prison were either isolated, given religious literature, and or work assignments. They also worked and ate together as the means by which they were to be rehabilitated. In either case, these early prisons enforced silence, so that the incarcerated person would have to contemplate the error of their ways (Gaines & Miller, 2009; Gibson, 2011; McShane & Williams, 1996; Pollock, 2006; Sifakis, 2003). As the 1830s neared an end, the Pennsylvania system's policy of extreme social isolation left many prisoners mentally ill; suicides were common. Summing up their observations about disciplinary practices found in the then US prison system, Beaumont, Tocqueville and Lieber (1833, p. 47) observed, "it must be acknowledged that the penitentiary system in America is severe. Whilst society in the United States gives the example of the most extended liberty, the prisons of the same country offer the spectacle of the most complete despotism."

Since these early times, there have been many attempts to improve conditions in US prisons signaled by the abolition of corporal punishment and the institution of recreational, educational, vocational, therapeutic activities, and programs. Along with these changes, rather than strict punishment, the goal of incarceration had been to rehabilitate the offender with an eye

on reintegrating him or her back into the society, more recently, between 1930 and 1950 (Gertner, 2010; Ryan, 2011). Since that time, the idea of rehabilitation as a goal has declined in popularity yielding to punitive aims (Kann, 2005; Pollock, 2006).

The Theoretical Meaning of Punishment

The politically conservative ideological shift in sentencing policy ushering in the era of mass incarceration was perhaps aided by a change in emphasis in the theoretical justifications for punishments hatched by academics between the mid-1960s and the 1970s (Davis, 2009; Ryan, 2011; Weisberg, 2012). The influence of Professor Andrew von Hirsch's *Doing Justice* (1976) and the demise of reform often linked to Professor Robert Martinson's *What Works?—Questions and Answers about Prison Reform* (1974) resulted in the revival of retributivism and an increase use of prison as the instrument and/or site for punishment during this time. Even so, it is not yet clear what is meant by punishment in the context of this review.

Defining punishment. Discussions about punishment in the context of criminal justice primarily focus upon its definition and justification (Bedau, & Kelly, 2010; Boonin, 2008; Bosworth, 2005; Flanders, 2012; Hill, 1999; Lacey, 1988; Marshall, 2000; McPherson, 1967; Wringe, 2012). These discussions are largely philosophical in nature and at times difficult to grasp. Remarkably, the *Encyclopedia of Prisons and Correctional Facilities* (Bosworth, 2005) does not include an entry defining the word “punishment.” Moreover, several scholars of note fail to clearly state exactly what punishment means in their discussions about justice, although they detail a range of theories and justifications for the concept (Hill, 1999; Wringe, 2012). Although the justification for punishment may be related to how it is defined, defining punishment must not be mixed with a justification for it; the two are not the same. Nevertheless,

some scholars assert that separating the meaning from its justification is a doubtful venture, although such an attempt will be made here (McPherson, 1967).

It is not enough to imply an understanding of the term, *punishment* by pointing to the use of prison or some other instrument as an example of its meaning without some clear definition (Boonin, 2008). For this review, a precise definition will help to explain what makes for punishment and what does not. Precisely because a host of practices are regarded as punishment and varying justifications offered for their use, a definition of punishment must precede any review of the more well-known theories of or justifications for punishment discussed below, so the definition is clear (Lacey, 1988). Lacey suggests that variations in the literature about the justification for punishment are likely to derive from different definitions of the word punishment. Accordingly, any definition of punishment should be *accurate* – include a way to distinguish it from something else; *illuminating* – clearly indicting why such is the case; and *neutral*, particularly on questions related to its justification (Boonin, 2008). Such a venture would permit a review of justifications offered for punishment separated from proposals regarding its meaning.

Contemporary scholars have monitored the debate about the meaning of punishment in philosophical circles since the 1950s. Although the meaning of punishment did not begin then, a standard definition of punishment for our time, known as the Flew-Benn-Hart definition, emerged (Davis, 2009; Garvey, 2011; Marshall, 2000; McPherson, 1967; Ryberg, 2004; Scheid, 1980). Andrew Flew (1954) was the first to offer a contemporary proposal of the meaning of punishment because he found then current understandings vague and the application of its meaning problematic. According to Flew (1954), punishment required five elements:

- it must be evil, an unpleasantness, to the victim;

- it must (at least appear) be for an offense;
- it must (presumably) be for the offender;
- it must be the work of personal agencies; and
- in a standard case, punishment has to (at least supposed to) be imposed by virtue of some special authority, conferred through or by the institutions against the laws or rules of which the offense has been committed.

Benn (1958) and Hart (1959) later adopted these elements as they entered the debate. At issue in these and future discussions was the development of a definition that did not include its justification (McPherson, 1967; Scheid, 1980).

Legal and State punishment. Some scholars suggest that punishment means “legal punishment” (Boonin, 2008) or “state punishment” (Lacey, 1988). This explanation is provided so that it is clear that what is being referred to are practices engaged in by “authorized” or “legitimate” institutions of punishment rather than punishment imposed for breach of contract, disobeying a parent, teacher, religious authority or are quasi-legal, without legal authority (e.g., vigilantes), or are *ad hoc* in nature (Hart, 1959).

Legal punishment is an action administered by an official agent and or state institution. It is issued for a violation of a state rule (law) believed to be committed by a party, with the intent of doing harm to the supposed wrongdoer, or imposing some legally unpleasant result or deprivation. Moreover, legal punishment follows public adjudication of a matter inclusive of officially recognized standards, as an official expression of disapproval of the rule violation committed (Boonin, 2008; Lacey, 1988; Honderich, 2006).

This definition considers legal punishment an official act designed to be unpleasant to the recipient; a social event that requires human agents acting in prescribe roles, and forced upon one

thought to have violated some law. In addition, no purpose for punishment is included in the definition (Bedau, & Kelly, 2010; Boonin, 2008; Honderich, 2006; Lacey, 1988). B. F. Skinner (2014, 1953) suggests that punishment, as generally understood, is a “technique of control . . . designed to tear down . . . tendencies to behave a certain way (p. 182).” However, Skinner (2014, 1953) notes that punishment need not be administered by an individual or a human agency. Punishment by its nature is an adverse stimulus that, once removed, affects an alternative behavior, for example, as when a child is “punished” by the fire for touching it or when one is “punished” with indigestion for eating bad food. Although a behaviorist approach may enlighten an analysis when seeking to determine the effectiveness of punishment (Skinner, 2014, 1953), for the purpose of this writing, punishment is the notion of legal punishment, and as such, this definition will anchor the more traditional theories of punishment outlined here, particularly as they relate to criminal justice. These are retribution, incapacitation, general and specific deterrence, and rehabilitation of those convicted of a crime (Bedau, & Kelly, 2010; Benavie, 2009; Bosworth, 2005; Dillof, 2011; Gromet & Darley, 2009; Honderich, 2006; Weisberg, 2012).

Theoretical Justifications for Punishment

Retribution. Views and theories about punishment are either forward-looking and consequentialist or backward-looking. The former includes rehabilitation, deterrence and incapacitation, and emphasizes future societal benefits. These are frequently described as utilitarian in nature since the overriding concern is with social welfare, social defense, and the prevention of crime. Conversely, retribution is primarily concerned with what happened in the past and focuses on the person thought to have engaged in the wrongdoing. Retribution takes a deontological approach without consideration of consequences and suggests that punishment is

the right thing to do in the name of justice (Bedau, & Kelly, 2010; Blumoff, 2001; Davis, 2009; Gerber & Jackson, 2013; Honderich, 2006; Locke, 2010; Robinson & Crow, 2009; Tännsjö, 2008; Tuckness, 2010; Tunick, 1992).

Among the theories mentioned, retribution is considered the oldest of the theories of punishment. It has been traced to the *Code of Hammurabi* dating back to the 18th century BC (Ryan, 2011). William Ian Miller's *Eye for an Eye* (2005) links Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and other Ancient European cultural references with the foundation of retributivism. Retribution is more commonly associated with the old adage of "an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" and notions about righting the "scale" of justice. These references are evident in Islamic-Judeo-Christian scriptures and texts - see the Old Testament Books of *Exodus* (Chapter 21), *Leviticus* (Chapter 24) and *Deuteronomy* (Chapter 19) - (Coulson, 2011; Grams-Benítez, 2011; Posner, 1980; Starkweather, 1992). Contemporary scholars typically link their discussions about retributivism to ideas first advanced by Emmanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel when attempting to explain its meaning (Bedau, & Kelly, 2010; Posner, 1980; Redding; 2016; Ryan, 2011; Tuckness, 2010; White, 2010). von Hirsch (1976; 1996) is associated with current explanations of retribution theory, particularly when framed as "just deserts," the idea that the punishment should be commensurate with the crime (Siegel, 2012).

Scholars have offered varying hybrid ways of conceptualizing retribution. These include "character" retribution, "choice" retribution, and "utilitarian" retribution. Character retribution is the justification for punishment based on the assumption that the wrongdoer possesses or possessed a character "worthy of condemnation" at the time of the crime (Garvey, 2006, p. 350). Choice retribution is the justification for punishment because wrong doers choose to do wrong while knowing the law forbids it (Garvey, 2006). Finally, utilitarian retribution is an attempt to

merge just deserts arguments with utilitarian justifications for punishment, among others, (Renz, 2012).

Generally, retribution requires that wrongdoing be paid back with punishment and is usually justified based upon the idea that punishment is deserved for violating societal laws (Gerber & Jackson, 2013; Starkweather, 1992; White, 2010). It is defensible in the name of justice. Some argue that retribution has nothing to do with revenge because it is an emotional response after being wronged (Bradley, 1999; Bradley, 2003; Renz, 2012), while others suggest that retribution is related to retaliation (Gerber & Jackson, 2013). A former New York City District Attorney argued that the central aim of retribution is not related to crime control but rather to the restoration of justice (Bradley, 1999; Bradley, 2003). Overall, this perspective manifests little regard for negative or positive consequences related to the individual deemed responsible for the wrongdoing or the society (Renz, 2012). Retribution is a non-consequentialist approach that contributed to mass incarceration, even though other aims of punishment may have simultaneously advanced during this period (White, 2010).

Much of what has been discussed relates to retribution in the traditional sense. von Hirsch's influence (1976) on our collective understanding of retribution is credited with the rise of retribution as the dominant justification for punishment during the era of mass incarceration. However, it was von Hirsch's ideas that began the division of retributionists' camps into two camps seen as revenge and retribution repackaged as "just deserts" (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Gerber & Jackson, 2013; Honderich, 2006; Ryan 2011). This divide resulted from the notion that punishment for wrongdoing was to be limited, as is suggested by traditional conceptualizations of the theory, wherein a limb lost is compensated for by another's limb (Bradley, 1999; Bradley, 2003; Renz, 2012; Starkweather, 1992; White, 2010). Some scholars,

led by von Hirsch, suggest that the idea of “just desserts” preserves and respects the dignity and humanity of the wrongdoer and evidences concern for the rights of the accused as well (Siegel, 2012; Starkweather, 1992). In addition, just deserts retributionism suggests that persons who commit the same or similar crime should receive the same or similar punishment (Vito & Maahs, 2012).

These ideas were the foundation of the sentencing guidelines developed during the 1970s era of mass incarceration. von Hirsch’s just deserts followed claims that previous sentencing policies had been unfair. Sentencing policies during this time introduced mandatory minimums, favored determinate sentencing, and virtually eliminated judicial discretion in sentencing people convicted of crime (Bosworth, 2005). However, many would argue that the resulting new policies lead to even harsher sentences and increased the time people spent in prison (Banks, 2013; Bosworth, 2005).

Deterrence. Some scholars argue that retribution, just deserts, and the drive to simply punish people convicted of crime rendered other theories justifying punishment unimportant (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). In contrast to retribution, deterrence is forward-looking because of its concern about crime prevention. The logic related to deterrence theory led to California’s “three strikes you’re out” policy (Kelly & Datta, 2011; Helland & Tabarrok, 2007) where a “strike” is a felony conviction. It also led to “truth in sentencing” policies in other parts of the country (Ditton & Wilson, 1999). These new policies fueled mass incarceration during the final decades of the last millennium, because they led to an increase in the number of incarcerated people, particularly those convicted of nonviolent crimes (Gilpin, 2012; Strutin, 2012).

Traditionally, harsh punishments were reserved for those thought to be hardened criminals.

Deterrence theory is rooted in the works of classical philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588-1678), Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794), and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) (Bosworth, 2005). The theory is predicated upon several assumptions, mainly the belief that humans are rational actors who are free to make choices about their behaviors (Piquero, Paternoster, Pogarsky & Loughran, 2011; Vito & Maahs, 2012). Moreover, as rational agents, human beings weigh costs and benefits of their actions and make decisions to maximize benefits and minimize costs after sorting these out (Giardini, Andrighetto & Conte, 2010; Kennedy, 2009). Presumably, would be violators of the law, once aware of the consequences of rule violation, are deterred from the choice to transgress against the law by the knowledge that the cost of doing so are too great (Braga & Weisburd, 2012; White, 2010). General knowledge about the consequences of rule violation is enhanced by public punishment or by making public the punishment of those who have previously violated the law. It is with this in mind that deterrists are likely to call for quickly administered harsh penalties so that those punished serve as an example to those contemplating violating the law. In this sense, deterrence is categorized as general deterrence since the target audience includes would be law breakers. When the target is the individual wrong doer, and the motivation for the punishment is to deter him or her from future crime, deterrence is considered specific deterrence (MacKenzie, 2012; Stafford & Warr, 1993). Finally, deterrists are least likely to be concerned about the harm done to those punished, guilty or not, or about extenuating circumstances that might be related to violations of the law (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002 ;Ellis, 2003). The concern of deterrists is only with the effect of the punishment to deter crime (White, 2010).

Incapacitation. David Garland (2001a) suggested in his *Culture of Control* that the expanded use of prisons as punishment for crime during the era of mass incarceration was easily

justified based upon theories of retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation. He asserted “that ‘prison works’ – not as a mechanism of reform or rehabilitation, but as a means of incapacitation and punishment that satisfies popular demands for public safety and harsh retribution” (Garland, 2001a, p. 14). Some scholars argue that incapacitation became the principal justification for imprisonment during the 1980s (Vito & Maahs, 2012) without any research about the effectiveness of this punishment policy (Zimring & Hawkins, 1995), while some believe it was an idea ripe for the time (Greenwood & Abrahamse, 1982).

In contrast to retribution, incapacitation is forward looking in that its initial concern is with the future commission of crime by the person convicted of a contemporary crime (Feeley & Simon, 1992). The goals of incapacitation are achieved by the temporary or permanent removal of the convicted person from society, for example, by means of the death penalty, life in prison, dismemberment or castration in the case of persons committing sexual crimes, or similar measures (Bosworth, 2005). Normally, incapacitation takes place in a jail or prison. There is no concern with rehabilitating the person convicted of a crime or with addressing social conditions often associated with crime; for example, poverty and high unemployment are often linked to crime or areas of high crime (Mohseni, 2012). It is assumed that if the person convicted of crime and others like him or her are imprisoned for a sufficient amount of time, the aggregate effect will impact crime rates (Feeley & Simon, 1992). This is referring to collective incapacitation. Collective incapacitation is based in the belief that higher incarceration rates will lead to greater reductions in the rates of crime and have a notable incapacitation effect (MacKenzie, 2012; Stahlkopf, Males & Macallair, 2010; Vito & Maahs, 2012).

Advocates of the “three strikes and you’re out” policy strengthened deterrence theory (Bosworth, 2005). The three strikes policy is also linked to selective incapacitation. Selective

incapacitation is another strategy employed to increase the likelihood that crime would be reduced by incarcerating a specific or special group of law breakers (Greenwood & Abrahamse, 1982; Forst, 1983; MacKenzie, 2012; Vito & Maahs, 2012). In essence, selective incapacitation is designed for so called *high risk, serious* felony, and or dangerous wrongdoers, who are targeted for extreme sentences often incongruent with the crime committed (Bosworth, 2005; Harcourt, 2012; Mohseni, 2012). The concept is linked with utilitarian concepts advanced by Jeremy Bentham, an English philosopher who wrote extensively in the 1700s and 1800s (Bosworth, 2005), and John Stuart Mill, an influential English 19th century theorist (Wilson, 2012).

Utilitarianism is predicated upon the notion that the good or benefit accrued by society outweighs the harm done to the convicted (Pollock, 2006). Harcourt (2012) notes that “punitive preventive measures” such as selective incapacitation do not include details about how much punishment is appropriate in a given situation. In some instances, people get very different sentences for having committed the same or similar crime (Greenwood & Abrahamse, 1982). As a consequence, increases in the number of people in prison with longer sentences contributed to mass incarceration without any noticeable impact on crime rates (Harcourt, 2012; Vito & Maahs, 2012). Moreover, some scholars argue that in the end, this approach does not deter crime because those new to crime may be more incline to continue their wayward ways once released because prisons are thought by some to function as crime schools (DeFina & Hannon, 2010; Haney, 2006a; Mbuba, 2012; Reasons & Kaplan, 1975).

Rehabilitation (Reform). Reform and rehabilitation have a long history in US penal philosophy, dating back to the 1700s (Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013; Gaines & Miller, 2009; Gibson, 2011; Lewis, 2005; Mays & Winfree, 2009; McShane & Williams, 1996; Murrin,

Johnson, McPherson, Gerstle, & Rosenberg, 2009; Pollock, 2006; Robinson & Crow, 2009; Sifakis, 2003). Rehabilitation is a forward-looking consequentialist approach to punishment that evidences concern about how people are “treated” during the punishment period as part of their preparation for release (Robinson & Crow, 2009). Fundamental to the model is the relationship between in-prison treatment and the after-prison experience with particular concern about its impact on recidivism (Boldt, 1998; Lipsey, Landenberger & Chapman, 2008).

Incarceration as punishment to rehabilitate violators of the law took root with progressive thinking during the early 1900s and gained wide acceptance on a national level as the 1930s began, in part, because the approach was used throughout the federal prison system (Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Progressives laid the foundations for what would come to be known as the medical model and introduced “treatment” and therapeutic personnel into the prison environment (Alarid, 2013; Bosworth, 2005; Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013). Others argue that the rehabilitative ideal includes in its design the prospect of a “good life” post treatment and or post release; the good life includes living within one’s means while having needs fulfilled post incarceration. Strategies for living the good life are learned during the punishment period (Ward, 2002). Despite its storied past, rehabilitation in the prison setting is often difficult to define because of the failure to distinguish rehabilitation from punishment; the two are not the same (Pollock, 2006; Robinson & Crow, 2009). Even so, the rehabilitation of incarcerated people is commonly associated with its root definition meaning to restore to some former capacity or former state, presumably one better than the state that led to prison (rehabilitate, n.d.). When referring to wrong doers, rehabilitation means restoring to the status of law-aiding citizen after the expiration of some sanction or ban through vocational, educational, or some form of treatment (Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013; Robinson & Crow, 2009).

For some scholars, rehabilitation “refers to the overall aims, values, principles, and etiological assumptions (about) . . . factors that are thought to cause offending” and how to treat those causes (Lipsey, Landenberger & Chapman, 2008; Ward, Mann & Gannon, 2007, p 89). These assumptions may have fueled the belief that crime was not rooted in some spiritual defect and could not be addressed with old formulas, which included imprisonment and meditation upon scripture alone (Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013; Manatu-Rupert, 2002). Early Progressives linked the causes of crime to “social, economic, biological, and psychological rather than religious or moral explanations” (Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013, p. 55) and called for individualized treatment plans based on knowledge of the case history (Alarid, 2013; Sieh, 2006). Aided by developments in behavioral and social sciences, this thinking gave rise to rehabilitation’s medical model (Bosworth, 2005; Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013; Sieh, 2006). Building on reforms already in place, probation, parole, and indeterminate sentencing, the medical model sought to add classification systems and treatment programs according to needs determined by individualized assessments (Bosworth, 2005; Clear, Cole & Reisig, 2013).

Punishment policies during the era of mass incarceration were designed to *hurt*. Earlier notations suggested that punishment was understood to include suffering, pain, or loss that served as retribution where there was little if any concern given to thoughts about community reintegration. In this context, the state of US prisons and the abandonment of the rehabilitation model during the era of mass incarceration affected the societal reentry or reintegration of formerly incarcerated people (Gideon, 2011) housed in prison or jail (Hughes & Wilson, 2003) with a range of deficits (Bernstein, 2011; Binswanger, et al., 2007; Binswanger, et al., 2011; Cnaan, Draine, Frazier, & Sinha, 2008; Geller & Curtis, 2011; Freudenberg, Daniels, Crum,

Perkins, & Richie, 2008; La Vigne, Cowan & Brazzell, 2006; Lim, et al., 2012; Maruscha, 2010). The implications of these ideas are addressed below.

The Prison Experience

The relationships between how incarceration is experienced, the day-to-day programming and prison services, post-prison offending, or recidivism have not been sufficiently studied. Moreover, the studies that do exist have had little effect on public policy (Mears, 2012; Nagin, Cullen & Jonson, 2009). Mears (2008) describes the internal mechanisms of the prison system that affect the incarcerated as a *black box*; it is a situation where little light has been reflected following many examinations. A special issue of the *Journal of Criminal Justice* edited by Daniel Mears (2012) contains perspectives of those who make a similar point about the relationship between misconduct among those housed within prison and newly enacted sentencing laws (Bales and Miller, 2012); misconduct and visitation (Cochran, 2012); victimization and misconduct (Wooldredge & Steiner, 2012); gang activity and prison violence (Worrall & Morris, 2012); perceptions about life after prison during the incarceration experience (Vishner & O'Connell, 2012) and others. While this information is helpful, additional perspectives need to be included, particularly those that relate to the psychological effects of the incarceration experience from those having had the experience. In this study, *trauma* and *stigma* are two important categories used to describe psychological damage wrought by the prison experience.

Deprivation and Importation Theory

In general, researchers' insights and explanations about the prison experience have followed one of two theoretical models, deprivation and importation (Blevins, Listwan, Cullen, & Jonson, 2010; Dye, 2010; Morris, et al., 2012; Tasca, Griffin & Rodriguez, 2010; Worrall &

Morris, 2012). The deprivation model is linked with Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961), and suggests that the in-prison experience is heavily influenced by the *amount* of pain suffered during incarceration. The importation model, linked to Irvin and Cressey (1962), emphasizes pre-prison factors, and suggests that preexisting patterns of behavior, attitudes, and values are likely to influence the prison experience. An interrelationship between the two is more likely. In any event, the prison experience is not like any other (Clemmer, 1940; Kling, 1941).

Sykes (1958) suggested that those involved with the justice system should be concerned about the psychological damage that results from incarceration in addition to the possibility of physical harm. Despite varying theories about punishment, few now argue that people in prison should receive physical punishment or endure physical violence as part of their sentences in order to fulfill contemporary objectives of punishment. However, many acknowledge that prison life today includes violence. It may take the form of inmate-on-inmate, staff-on-inmate, and inmate-on-staff abuse, or even murder and sexual violence (Gibbons & Katzenbach, 2006; Kupers, 1996; Listwan, Colvin, Hanley & Flannery, 2010; Morgan, 2009; Patrick, 1998; Pollock, 2006; Trammel, 2006), all of which may make the experience psychologically painful.

Some researchers argue that the psychological pain of incarceration or the suffering incarnates are made to endure, is not inadvertent, but inflicted by design (Brookes, 2001; Goffman, 1961). Brooks (2001, p. 40) maintains that the forced deprivations commonly resulting in pain and suffering in a prison environment occur as a matter of policy. Goffman (1961, p. 14) suggests that the “processes through which mortification of the (person entering prison) occurs are fairly standard, . . . last around the clock, and may continue for years; . . . (the incarcerated person) is led into a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self” at the very start of the period of incarceration.

Sykes (1958) characterizes these psychologically damaging experiences as “deprivations or frustrations,” and suggests that some of these frustrations “appear as a serious attack on the personality, as a threat to the life goal of the individual, to his defensive system, to his self-esteem, or to his feelings of security” (p. 64). These forms of trauma are likely to accrue because of deprivations from a loss of liberty, material impoverishment, and personal vulnerabilities, loss of sexual relationships, loss of autonomy, and loss of personal security (Sykes (1958). In summary, added to the tangible and easily identified forms of punishment, incarceration may inflict more subtle emotional and psychological punishment (Pizarro & Stenius, 2004).

Haney (2011, p. 126) also acknowledges how “dangerously pathological day-to-day- life inside many of our correctional institutions [have] become;” how “[g]rown men are emasculated and infantilized by the very conditions of their confinement;” and how they “are likely to feel humiliated and dehumanized by the way they are treated” during the incarceration period by prison staff. Treatment by staff may be even more abusive in so called “super-max prisons,” as Haney suggests, “ranging from deliberate indifference to outright brutality” (2008, p. 958). Although “the pains of confinement are [ostensibly] limited to . . . psychological deprivations” (Johnson, 1992, p. 63), the experience of physical or psychological assault is painful and may adversely affect post-release outcomes. Other scholars have suggested that even brief periods of incarceration may lead to feelings of “intense pains” resulting from “acute psychological trauma and breakdowns” and “extreme emotional depression, crying, rage, and acute anxiety” suffered during the ordeal (Haney & Zimbardo, 1998, p. 709). Even in mock incarcerations, evidence of the adverse effects of incarceration occurred (Haney & Zimbardo, 1998; Kaye 2008; Zimbardo, 1973). For example, while engaged in the famous Stanford Prison Experiment, a simulated case study designed to assess the influences of situational variables on human behavior, Haney and

colleagues observed that a student prisoner “developed a psychosomatic rash which covered portions of his body” (as cited by Kaye, 2008, p. 622).

Several other scholars highlight the prevalence of mental illness among significant portions of the prison population (Toch & Kupers, 2007; Torrey, et al., 2010). Rather than finding themselves in treatment, in the US, there are three times as many “individuals with serious mental illnesses in jails and prisons than in hospitals” (Torrey, et al., 2010, p. 7). Toch and Kupers (2007) contend that people that come to prison with diagnosed and undiagnosed mental illnesses often cause violent behavior in prison. A report on the US incarcerated population found that as many as “56% (705,600) of State prisoners, 45% (78,800) of Federal prisoners, and 64% (479,900) of jail inmates” had mental health problems, compared to one in four adults in the US who reported having a mental illness that were not incarcerated (James & Glaze, 2006, p. 1; Reeves, et al., 2011). The report also indicated that among people in state prisons, those with a diagnosed mental health problem compared to those without (61% vs. 56%), were more likely to have a history of having committed a violent offense. They also noted that, on average, those with mental health issues had longer maximum sentence lengths (146 months to 141 months); were expected to served more time overall; and among all those incarcerated, rule violations, including assaults, and being injured in fights were more prevalent among those with mental health problems compared to those without (James & Glaze, 2006). Examples of these would include: “possession of a weapon, stolen property or contraband, drug law violations, work slowdowns, food strikes, setting fires or rioting, being out of place, disobeying orders, abusive language, horseplay, or failing to follow sanitary regulations” (James & Glaze, 2006, p. 10). In some instances, behaviors of those with an undiagnosed illness are misunderstood, so their illness may go unaddressed and a negative cycle of interaction ensues

between them and those within the prison environment, including staff and peers (Toch & Kupers, 2007). These factors worsen the prison experience for those suffering from mental illness and make more difficult the transition upon release.

Prison Trauma

Despite mounting evidence about the effects of prison, few researchers have paid attention to the *social experiences* inside prison that are likely to have in-prison and post-prison consequences (Boxer, Middlemass, & Delorenzo, 2009). For example, Wooldredge (1999) found those in prison who displayed a healthy psychological wellbeing were more likely to take advantage of opportunities to participate in rehabilitation programming, had low levels of victimization, and were more likely to have positive and frequent interaction with outside visitors. All of these factors are thought to have pro-social implications post-release. In his study, Wooldredge conceptualized psychological wellbeing “as . . . inmate’s perception of insecurity, stress, depression, anger, low self-esteem, and loneliness” (1999, p. 238). There is another side to this experience with post release outcomes.

Men in prison are likely to report experiencing trauma related to in-prison murders, assaults as victims, perpetrators or witnesses, or from some pre-prison experience, particularly sexual assault, although the numbers are likely to be underreported. The extent to which people in prison report such events is likely related to staff mistrust, fear of peers, or the violation of some in-prison norm or code, for example, “snitching,” that is, acting as an informant (Miller & Najavits, 2012). Boxer and colleagues (2009) observed that exposure to violence during incarceration, largely among those who were victims of violence, is related to antisocial behavior and varying forms of psychological distress post release. In fact, Schnittker and his colleagues found among formerly incarcerated people a strong association between the incarceration

experience and mood disorders compared to those without a history of confinement (for example, depression) post release (Schnittker, Massoglia, & Uggen, 2012). As alluded to above, more than a million people with a mental disorder are housed in State or federal prisons, and in jails around the country every year [see Appendix A for table showing the *Prevalence of symptoms of mental disorders among prison and jail inmates* (James & Glaze, 2006)]. It is likely, given that 95% of those in prison are eventually released, the numbers released include similar percentages with a mental illness returning to the community, many with conditions that may well have been exacerbated by the experience or developed because of it. In many cases, the effect of prison will only be noticed by the formerly incarcerated after release (Haney, 2012a).

While attention is drawn to the effects of prison, this is not to suggest that people in prison are more prone to psychiatric disorders than others or that disorders, once detected should be used “as a means of labeling and thereby controlling deviant behavior (Schnittker, et al., 2012, p. 462). I am wary of pathologizing those exposed to pathological experiences. Instead, as Schnittker and his colleagues (2012) concluded, the psychiatric disorders that result from the incarceration experience are likely to be responsive to treatment and intervention as are others in the general population with similar ailments during and after prison if afforded to those in need.

Even so, during this age of increasingly high rates of incarceration, the effects of the incarceration experience have received limited attention from political leaders and scant empirical attention from researchers (Wildeman, Turney, & Schnittker, 2014). There are a number of studies indicating that the psychological effects of incarceration are substantial (Bosworth, 2010; Claes, et al., 2009; Dmitrieva, Monahan, Cauffman & Steinberg, 2012; Geaney, 2008; Grassian, 2006; Grounds, 2004; Ground & Jamieson, 2003; Haney, 2003b; Haney, 2006b; Haney, 2006c; Haney, 2006d; Haney, 2008; Haney, 2012b; Haney & Lynch,

1997; Rhodes, 2005), even among those experiencing relatively short-term confinement in a jail (Toch, 2007) or refugee and detention incarceration (McCulloch & Pickering, 2008). Haney (2006d), in addition to noting that prison overcrowding created unhealthy and unsafe environments, also found that prison overcrowding had a negative psychological effect upon incarcerated as a result of increased levels of stress. Other environmental factors mattered as well. His research provides evidence that supermax prisons tend to negatively impact the mental wellbeing of those housed in them (Haney, 2008). Supermax prisons ensure a host of deprivations, including denying the incarcerated human contact, mental stimulation, and in some cases, fresh air (Haney, 2008).

Grassian (2006), a leading scholar formerly associated with Harvard Medical School and an expert on the effects of solitary confinement, detailed specific characteristics associated with clinical disorders likely to result from being housed in a prison isolation cell including hyper-responsivity to external stimuli, perceptual distortions, illusions, and hallucinations, panic attacks, difficulties with thinking, concentration, and memory, intrusive obsessional thoughts, overt paranoia, and problems with impulse control. Haney (2012a, p. 3) suggests that a “clinical diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder” among the incarcerated, “may occur as much as 10 times more often than in the general population.” Moreover, the harsh prison conditions are not likely to lead to positive post-release outcomes (Chen & Shapiro, 2007). Other scholars found that incarceration had a negative effect upon the psychosocial development of young people confined to residential and secure facilities (Dmitrieva, Monahan, Cauffman & Steinberg, 2012). Dmitrieva and colleagues (2012, p. 1076) conceptualized psychosocial maturity as “temperance, perspective, and responsibility,” and included a number of measures to assess the dimensions of these components.

Despite the amount of evidence about the effects of imprisonment, available reports of the enduring consequences of incarceration vary greatly. A number of researchers did not report psychological harm resulting from incarceration. Moreover, they have questioned the credibility of studies on the prison experience on methodological grounds. For example, reviews of studies related to psychological harms by Zinger (1999), Bonta and Gendreau (1990), Bukstel and Kilmann (1980), and Goethals (1980) found faulty research designs, questionable sampling techniques, and other methodological problems. This may explain why those who report findings of harm avoid making definitive statements about the extent of the psychological harm resulting from incarceration. In addition, some who did not find an adverse psychological effects as a result of time spent in solitary confinement relied heavily upon a large body of experimental literature that included the use of college students who spent only a few days under mock conditions (Bonta & Gendreau, 1990). Smith (2006), however, observed that prisons are not like laboratories and incarcerated people are quite different from volunteer students. He suggests the use of methodological approaches that include those having the in-prison experience might yield answers rooted in an in-prison experience rather those based on laboratory observations (Smith, 2006). Research design flaws prevent the drawing of meaningful conclusions and make results found after such research doubtful. As a result of reviews similar to those noted above, researchers examining findings from poor research were doubtful about the psychological effects of incarceration.

The Post-Release Experience

Reentry is the criminal justice system's relatively new catchword. It has emerged from similar yet older terms including *prisoner aftercare*, *reintegration*, *resettlement*, and others (Austin, 2001; Miller & Spillane, 2012). All these terms attempt to describe what happens after

release, including efforts to surmount the challenges related to being formerly incarcerated, and efforts to acquire needed services to facilitate reentry (Mauer, 2002; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Miller & Spillane, 2012; Travis, 2002; Visher & Travis, 2011). If Petersilia's (2004) definition is considered, reentry also includes in-prison activities and programming related to rehabilitation since these are meant to prepare for a safe return to the community and a life as a law-abiding citizen. Research shows that reentry following prison is complicated by problems related to individualized stigma and the stigma assigned to the families of former incarcerates; a former incarcerate's continued identification with a criminal life or incarceration; financial strain; and strained interpersonal and social relationships post-release (Clear, Rose, & Ryder, 2001; Goffman, 1963). Even so, the process of reentry is not well understood and further complicated by varying understandings of what successful reentry means (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005; Bahr, Harris, Fisher & Armstrong, 2010; Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2012; Lynch, 2006; Petersilia, 2005). As a result, there is little agreement on whether prisoner reentry programs work, and when statistically significant reductions in recidivism are found, some scholars are unimpressed by the differences produced (Lattimore, Steffey, & Visher, 2010; Visher, 2006).

As researchers seek to understand the reentry process better, there is an emerging body of literature that underlines the significance of including the subjective perspectives of former incarcerates in their attempts to understand the influence of the lived experiences of this population (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005; Bahr, Harris, Fisher & Armstrong, 2010; Byrne & Trew, 2008; Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2012; LeBel, 2012; Healy & O'Donnell, 2008; Lowen & Isaacs, 2012; Martinez & Abrams, 2011; Mbuba, 2012; Visher & O'Connell, 2012) - including women, whose pre, in-prison and post-prison experiences are different from men

(Cobbina, 2010; Hedderman, Gunby, & Shelton, 2011). Inclusion of the subjective perspectives of formerly incarcerated people will likely provide nuanced representations of post release experiences that help inform efforts to increase positive post prison outcomes and bolster development of effective post-release interventions (Yang, et al., 2009). Moreover, this inclusion is expected to bring into view the humanity of those involved in the process of righting themselves (Polizzi & Maruna, 2010). Overall, there are a limited number of studies that have asked formerly incarcerated people about their reentry prospects and even fewer that have “analyze(d) the racialized dynamics of prisoner reentry (Trimbur, 2009, p. 260). Among those few, LeBel (2012, p. 80) includes the perceptions of a population sample that 100% identifies as being formerly incarcerated, but the results are derived from quantitative analysis of a self-administered questionnaire. However, he concludes recognizing that qualitative research would “provide a more in-depth examination of the . . . perceptions of discrimination on the reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated persons” (LeBel, 2012, p. 80).

The in-prison experience is just one of the phases in the reentry process. The process is best understood within a longitudinal framework (Bahr, Harris, Fisher & Armstrong, 2010; Visher & Travis, 2003). An analysis should also include an examination of the period immediately following release and the ensuing periods when post release experiences are apt to become increasingly difficult or when sufficient adjustments increase the probability of post release *success* (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005). Bahr and colleagues (2005, p. 247) report that the first three months “is a critical period in the transition from prison to the community.” Other scholars have noted that among those released from prison about 30% are likely to be arrested for a felony or misdemeanor within six months of release, 44% within a year, 59% within two years, about 68% within three years and 77% within five (Cooper, Durose,

& Snyder, 2014; Langan & Levin, 2002). Other researchers have observed that the likelihood of death as a result of a drug overdose is highest within this three year period as well (Binswanger, et al., 2007). These and other studies indicate that there are three sets of factors related to recidivism, individual, social and environmental, and that the initial months post release have a significant impact upon after prison outcomes (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005; Luther, Reichert, Holloway, Roth, & Aalsma, 2011; Stahler, et al., 2013).

Once released, some previously incarcerated people are nostalgic about their experiences in prison, particularly when they find life on the outside difficult or when they believe they are unable to function because of the pace, responsibilities, and amount of effort needed to fend for themselves (Lowen & Isaacs, 2012; Mbuba, 2012). For example, Mbuba (2012, p. 242) reported that the people he interviewed expressed difficulties adjusting to the new yet normal practices of the post-prison world including “wear[ing] different clothes, tak[ing] out trash, [and] go[ing] to the refrigerator . . . shar[ing] a bed [or] getting [physically] close [to people].” In contrast, some formerly incarcerated people are grateful for the in-prison experience and note that it had a positive impact on their post-prison experiences. For example, when asked about his experience, one formerly incarcerated person said that “If I never went to prison I would be dead by now . . . [I]t took me to get locked up in order to grow up” (Mbuba, 2012, p. 247). While another said, “you can come out better if you take advantage of all the opportunities offered there” (Mbuba, 2012, p. 247).

A number of studies indicate that many formerly incarcerated people feel discriminated against, and they feel labeled. The meaning imputed to the incarceration experience is similar to how the early Greeks conceptualized stigma as a body marking that signaled past deviant behavior or immorality (Goffman, 1963). Formerly incarcerated people feel that their having

been in prison is somehow prominently tattooed and visible for all they encounter to see (LeBel, 2012; Maruna, 2011; Moran, 2012). Moreover, the markings of stigma suggest that they should be avoided, subsequently presenting a challenge to a positive reentry (Goffman, 1963). These feelings of being an *other* and of discrimination are in addition to those derived from what often are life time consequences of incarceration. These include disenfranchisement, the denial of social benefits, employment barriers, being denied access to higher education, and more (Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Petersila, 2003). Although not frequently explored among formerly incarcerated people, it is believed that feelings of discrimination result in adverse psychological feelings, anger, resentment, and impede the reentry process (LeBel, 2012). It is likely that former incarcerates could be more exposed to *social injuries* that have an adverse effect upon fragile psychics or exacerbate post-prison psychic discomfort as a result of these perceptions (Trimbur, 2009).

Even more problematic is when formerly incarcerated people internalize prejudices and stereotypes of others that they encounter post-release and self-identify as a deviant or criminal (Becker, 1963; Tannenbaum, 1957). Subsequently, the anti-social behaviors former incarcerates may engage in post-release are rationalized base upon their individual perceptions of being excluded from mainstream opportunities because they have been tagged or identified as *one of them* (Bernburg & Krohn, 2006; Bernburg, Krohn, & Rivera, 2006; Mbuba, 2102). For example, those Mbuba (2102) interviewed complained of *societal rejection* after being denied employment despite believing themselves qualified, and after treatment received by law enforcement agents during “routine” stops or if stopped after a crime took place in their neighborhood. Goffman (1963) alludes to this when suggesting that the stigmatized person is not accepted as a full member of society by the *normals* no matter what they say or do, or how stigmatized people

think of themselves. This feeling of social rejection is particularly salient among those convicted of sex offenses, a group likely to find their search for housing difficult because of forced registration and publicizing of their status. For the formerly incarcerated, the invisible punishments never seem to end, effectively preventing those released from actually reintegrating into society (Mbuba, 2102). The psychological aspects of the post-release experience deserves consideration when designing and evaluating reentry programs if the goal is to increase post-prison *success*. These factors may also facilitate an understanding of success post release that moves beyond the “industry standard” of three years out without detection of law violation.

Barriers to a Successful Reentry

It is probable that during interviews with this study’s participants a number of themes will emerge that they believe important and that relate to their ideas of a successful reentry. These items, which are reviewed here, make the achievement of success as they imagine it, difficulty if not impossible. I review some of them here. With regard to the potential relationships between the prison and the after prison life, Drucker (2011), an epidemiologist, proposes that prisons be thought of as places that produce lifelong disabilities “characteristic of . . . epidemics of chronic illnesses” (p. 108) that are likely to make reintegration post-prison difficult. This perspective shifts the paradigm from previous analysis.

Formerly incarcerated people bearing the dual stigma of being poor and of color, are likely to suffer from *chronic incapacitation* and endure a *double* penalty post-release that seems to extend to every aspect of that person’s life indefinitely. The areas affected include their ability to obtain employment, public assistance, housing, voting rights and other matters related to living as a *normal* citizen. If these items relate to their notions of success, as they attempt to acquire them and do not, they are likely to perceive themselves doubly doomed post release

because they have a criminal record and they are Black (Solomon, 2012; Drucker, 2011; Weiman, 2007; Pinard, 2006).

Employment. There is research indicating that some 92 million US citizens 18 and older have a criminal history file (Greenspan, 2010) and that a third of all US citizens have a record of arrest by age 23 (Brame, Turner, Paternoster & Bushway, 2012). Those with arrest records and those exiting the criminal justice system understand the importance of being employed as they seek to stay out of prison. Most want to work but often leave prison skeptical about the likelihood of employment (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013; Swanson, Langfitt-Reese & Bond, 2012; Weiman, 2007). The effect of having a record of arrest and or conviction makes employment difficult; the effect of having a record of arrest is disproportionately worsened for poor African Americans in the US, especially those experiencing incarceration (Pager, 2003; Solomon, 2012). The Pew Center on the States reported that 1 in 100 US citizens were behind bars in 2008 (Pew Charitable Trust, 2008). These figures are more disparate when men of varying racial groups are compared: among White men 18 and older, 1 in 106 were incarcerated in 2008, 1 in 36 Hispanic men 18 and older, and among Black men 18 and older, 1 in 15 were in prison or jail (1 in 9 Black men between 20 and 34 were in prison or jail) (Pew Charitable Trust, 2008). Pager (2003) also found that African Americans in the US experienced discrimination when seeking employment post-prison. In addition, employers tend to be less likely to hire formerly incarcerated people (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013), and even less likely to hire from among African Americans in the US when it is known that they have a criminal record (Pager, 2003). It is well known that a significant number of formerly incarcerated people entered prison hard to employ, with few marketable skills, and are often less able to compete in today's job market when released (Bushway & Apel, 2012). Formerly incarcerated African Americans who live in urban

communities are not likely to find traditional low skill employment because these jobs are no longer located in or near their communities (Weiman, 2007). Moreover, even when skilled, direct (statutes and policies related to licensure) and indirect (background checks used as grounds for exclusion from work) barriers add to the number of hurdles to be overcome (Harris & Keller, 2005).

Public assistance and public housing. Barriers to employment for the formerly incarcerated were exacerbated by changes in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 that included a lifetime ban on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Food Stamps for those convicted of a drug offense. Moreover, there were changes in federal housing laws that either banned or made difficult the housing of the formerly incarcerated in public housing (Allard, 2002; Drucker, 2011; Pinard, 2010; Rubinstein & Mukamal, 2002). Lack of social supports and stable housing are likely to decrease the probability of a *successful* reentry. Drucker (2011) links housing restrictions placed on the formerly incarcerated to chronic homelessness he dubs a “lifetime consequence of imprisonment” (p. 133). As the 1990s ended, 11% of those released from New York State prisons between 1995 and 1998 were homeless within two years of release; about a third of those returned were returned to prison during that two year period (Drucker, 2011). Other researchers have shown that among chronically homeless adults, as many as 50% have experienced incarceration (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008; Lim, et al., 2012; Tsai & Rosenheck, 2012). Despite these findings, many housing and income supplement restrictions remain in place, effectively increasing the size of the obstacles faced after prison when support is sought to aid reintegration.

Neighborhood effect. Data also show that a substantial number of people released from prison under parole supervision usually live in poor urban neighborhoods (Harding, Morenoff & Herbert, 2013). Some researchers suggest that the criminogenic elements previously plaguing these communities prior to incarceration are likely to persist, thus placing those returning from prison at a high risk of reincarceration (Kirk, 2013; Stahler, et al., 2013). In a meta-analysis of recent “neighborhood effects” literature, scholars suggest that there are linkages between crime rates and social connections, and relationship patterns within neighborhoods; availability of resources; and the interconnectedness of the residents (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). The neighborhood effects theory grew from William J. Wilson’s *The Truly Disadvantaged* (2012) wherein he suggested that “constraints and opportunities associated with living in a neighborhood in which the population is overwhelmingly socially disadvantaged” contribute to an involvement in criminal activity because they are socially isolated (p. 144). As a result, notions of hyper-incarceration (Kirk, 2013; Wacquant, 2010a) and “million dollar blocks” (Cadora, Swartz, & Gordon, 2003) are plausible, and tend to support suggestions that millions are annually spent to incarcerate residents from a few select urban areas. Nearly all who go to prison are eventually returned from prison. With few opportunities in prison to adequately prepare for the new world, the likelihood of a formerly incarcerated person being a criminogenic influence is just as great as a that same person being influenced by the criminogenic elements found in the area (Stahler, et al., 2013).

Felony Disenfranchisement. A number of issues related to post-prison reintegration are not easily measured. For these, the extent to which they contribute to post-prison reintegrate are in dispute. Several scholars have dubbed these and those mentioned before as collateral or invisible punishments and include among them the denial of voting rights as a major impediment

to full reintegration (Drucker, 2011; Mauer, 2002; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Pinard, 2010; Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan & Blitz, 2005; Travis, 2002). Collateral consequences are not modern innovations. They are linked to the notion of “civil death” during the time of Medieval Europe when those convicted of crimes lost all rights including, in some instances, “the right to vote, hold property, enter into contracts, and even, in some cases, the right to life” (Miller & Spillane, 2012, p. 406). The right to vote is integral to one’s sense of citizenship and collective identity. Purtle contends that the denial of the vote is universally recognized as a human rights violation, the effects of which are known to “produce adverse consequences for physical, mental, and social wellbeing” (2013, p. 632).

Felony disenfranchisement laws and related policies have a long history in the United States but the effects of these laws are more severely felt in communities of color (Burkhardt, 2011; Dawson-Edwards, 2008). Several scholars have linked the increase in the incarceration of Black Americans in the US with increased state adoption of felony disenfranchisement laws (Behrens, Uggen & Manza, 2003). Scholars have estimated that 1 in 40 voting age US citizens may not vote because of a felony conviction; among voting age African Americans, 1 in 13 may not vote because of a felony conviction (Uggen, Shannon & Manza, 2012); and among voting age African American males, 13% are unable to vote because of a conviction (Purtle, 2013). The ratio of those who may not vote among all voting age African Americans compared to non-African Americans overall is more than 4.3 to 1 (Uggen, et al., 2012). However, with variations in state felony disenfranchisement laws and punishment strategies, in some states, Florida (23%), Kentucky (22%), and Virginia (20%), nationally, well over one in five African American may not vote or an estimate exceeding five million because they have a felony conviction (Burkhardt, 2011; Drucker, 2011; Mauer, 2002; Purtle, 2013; Uggen, Shannon & Manza, 2012). Denied the

right to vote, when formerly incarcerated people are unable to participate in the franchise they are likely to feel that the punishments they received when initially sentenced have no end-date, that they will never be accepted as full citizens, and that reintegration is less likely to be complete (Dawson-Edwards, 2008; Miller & Spillane, 2012).

Parole (Community supervision). In addition to the inability to vote and punitive penal policies, some researchers assert that post-prison supervision (parole) is another barrier to a successful reentry (Diller, Greene & Jacobs, 2009; Petersilia, 1999; Travis, 2002). In Bosworth's (2005) *Encyclopedia of Prisons and Correctional Facilities*, the origins of parole are linked with Alexander Macdonochie (1787-1860) of England, Walter Crofton (1815-1897) of Ireland, and Zebulon Brockway (1827-1920) of the US (also see Petersilia, 1999). Initially, parole was founded as a system of reward for good conduct during incarceration. In the old system, people in prison could earn an early release. In Ireland, under the system established by Crofton, people on parole reported to local law enforcement agencies who aided them in finding work and resources to fulfill their needs. In the US, both these ideas were incorporated in discretionary release or early release following an administrative review (indeterminate sentencing policies) and the subsequent supervision post-release by an agency other than the local police. The system served multiple purposes: it encouraged participation in rehabilitation programs; provided in-prison management tools for maintaining order with a promise of early release for good behavior and program participation; and was a means to release the less risky from prison when prisons became overcrowded (Bosworth, 2005; Petersilia, 1999). In general, “[p]arole was founded primarily to foster offender reformation rather than to increase punitiveness or surveillance” (Petersilia, 1999, p 482). For some, this perception has changed.

Those released on parole are provided details regarding the conditions of their supervision (Bosworth, 2005; Petersilia, 1999—see Appendix B for conditions of supervision in New State). Besides the conditions of release, people on parole are given little information about how parole officers are to be helpful. Instead, the tone of the relationship suggests “supervision” rather than “services;” rather than provide assistance that might facilitate reintegration, parole officers act as quasi-police placed in the community to enforce the conditions of release (Petersilia, 1999; Raphael, 2011).

In New York State, the mission of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision suggests that people returned to the community will receive “supportive services under community supervision to facilitate a successful completion of their sentence” (NYS DCCS, 2013). It is unlikely that large numbers would report that as their experience. Instead, many might suggest the conditions of release are problematic; for example, there is no limit to what may fall under special conditions, a provision that permits parole officers to arbitrarily add conditions without procedural process or rational justification. Moreover, these general conditions do not detail beforehand various monetary sanctions or parole supervision fees, moneys payable by those on parole toward their supervision, that are not known until after release from prison (Harris, Evans, & Beckett, 2010; Ruback & Bergstrom, 2006). Some researchers posit that these additional post-release debts contribute to the likelihood of continued criminal activity and are a disincentive to work (Harris, Evans, & Beckett, 2010). Travis (2002) contends that these combined invisible punishments are in fact “the diminution of the rights and privileges of citizenship” and that they run counter to the idea of being made whole following paying one’s debt to society. Travis (2002) noted that these actions have expanded in recent years, making reintegration increasingly difficult.

In addition to post-release supervision policies, some will argue that community supervision officers make matters worse. Helfgott (1997) found that a good number of people on parole expressed concerns about the relationship they had with their parole officers. Many thought the community supervision officers made unreasonable demands, lacked a thorough understanding of their situations, were insensitive, and did not view them “as a resource in the reintegration process” (Helfgott, 1997, p. 16). In some instances, the negative perceptions people on parole had of their parole officers derived from their perceived social distance, that is, the perception that they are not respected, trusted, or viewed as having similar life experiences (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011).

Social and Psychological Factors and Post-Release Success

Social factors - Black masculinity and racism. Although it is not a central aspect of this study, Black masculinity may emerge as a theme as study participants talk about issues they sought to overcome. Earlier reference was made to research, which depicted the prison experience as emasculating, noting that incarcerates are likely made to feel less than men by the experience and by the way some are treated by prison staff (Haney, 2011). The historical relationship between the White keepers and the Black kept has been mentioned previously. Continuing this theme, it seems clear that the gender-role attitudes of Black men in the US have been shaped by the historical development of race relations between Blacks and Whites. As they return from prison, Black men are likely to encounter an environment inclusive of racism and prejudice fueling personal and institutional slights complicated by past involvement with the justice system (Franklin, 1999; Pierre, Woodland, & Mahalik, 2001; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). Regardless of their personal challenges, Black men who seek to succeed must compete in an environment wherein they are generally devalued, disempowered, and made to feel invisible, all

of which serve as common assaults upon a positive gender identity for Black men (Franklin, 1999; Pierre, Woodland & Mahalik, 2001).

In the Black community, there is no singular notion of masculinity, although the *patriarchal version* – “provider, lover, disciplinarian, reader, and thinker” –is the one most valued (hooks, 1992, p. 88; Hunter & Davis, 1992). Historically, normative notions of manhood generally included a semblance of autonomy, the ability to provide for one’s family, independence, and employment, being responsible, and having an ability to access resources (Nandi, 2002; Kann, 2001). In the US, “[e]nslaved Black men of the 19th century used the White slave owners as the standard of manhood to which they aspired. The White male’s possessions of dominance, power and control were well-establish aspects of manhood” (Pierre, Woodland, & Mahalik, 2001, p. 24). Similarly, prior to experiencing prison during the era of hyper (mass) incarceration, Black males in the US continued to be influenced by the dominant ideal of masculinity as middle class white able-bodied heterosexual males offered by White scholars inspired by the works of Erik Erikson, best known for his theories on psychosocial development (Johnson, 2010; Phillips, 2006; Walker, 2011). (For additional references see Connell, 2005).

These concepts of masculinity include a litany of characteristics that are historically hegemonic and androcentric (Hunter & Davis, 1994, 1992; Wade & Rochlen, 2013): “toughness, sexual promiscuity, manipulation, thrill-seeking, and a willingness to use violence to resolve inter-personal conflict” (Pinn, 1996, p. 24). Levant and Richmond (2007, p. 131) include traits advanced by Brannon and David (1976): (1) “no sissy stuff” (that men should avoid feminine things); (2) “the big wheel” (that men should strive for success and achievement); (3) “the sturdy oak” (that men should not show weakness); and (4) “give ’em hell” (that men should seek

adventure, even if violence is necessary). In all, these traits tend to reduce the significance of the environment in which they play out, and find men exhibiting “assertiveness, dominance, control, physical strength, and emotional restraint” (Griffith, Gunter & Watkins, 2012, p. 187; hooks, 1992; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). However, when these features manifest in US Black men, they suggest that they are dangerous and irresponsible. Moreover, the number of Black men able to manifest these characteristics, in part or wholly, is generally limited by class, race and place, that is, by their membership in urban communities of color plagued by poverty, crime and incarceration, although most continue to desire these qualities for themselves (hooks, 1992; Mutua, 2012; Nandi, 2002; Pinn, 1996).

Some might argue that efforts to be a “man” may be linked to the incarceration of Black men; robbing to be a provider, becoming a gang membership or engaging in acts of violence to be thought of as tough and worthy of respect; promiscuous behavior and or rape to show dominance over women (Sabo, 2001). These behaviors assume that masculinity is a fixed set of traits that play out across a wide range of situations based upon a sense of agency or upon man’s ability to perform or to do things (Caster, 2008; Nandi, 2002). To be a “man” one needs to have this ability. One-dimensional approaches are difficult to adopt given the multiple spaces and environments in which the gender-role behavior of black men returning from prison develop (Hunter & Davis, 1994).

Alternately, an approach to masculinity directly related to anticipated themes likely to emerge in this study include the social constructivist perspective, which takes into account context and interactions with social structures and institutions as key factors in the formation of masculine identities (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011). Addis and Cohane (2005) write to provide a social learning approach based primarily upon the notion that

behavior is learned via mimicking what is modeled coupled with processes of approval and disapproval that either encourage or discourage the behavior and a psychodynamic approach that includes references to the early stages of male life and relationships with caregivers and others.

Other scholars have noted a variety of definitions and meanings of a negotiated Black masculinity that have grown out of Black struggle and Black culture in the US. For example, “cool pose” (an aloof detachment and show of confidence illustrated in walk, talk and gestures) and others are far too complex to be wholly unraveled here, are suggestive of the efforts of Black men to cope and construct identities in adverse environments (Courtenay, 2000; Franklin, 1986; Gordon et al, 2013; Griffith, Gunter & Watkins, 2012; Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011; hooks, 1992; Hunter & Davis, 1992; Johnson, 2010; Nickleberry & Coleman, 2012; Pierre, Woodland, & Mahalik, 2001; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). In the same way, gendered identities of formerly incarcerated Black men developed prior to incarceration were likely compromised during their imprisonment (Haney 2011; Nandi, 2002). Nandi (2002, p. 94) speculates that “the loss of autonomy, forced adherence to rigid institutional rules and ruling systems, and a loss of tangible resources profoundly contradict normative notions of masculinity and manhood.” For some, imprisonment likely exasperated this problem.

Adaptations of a gender identity developed in prison may not work well when attempting to reintegrate into the community or in personal, social, and family relationships. The experience of incarceration and racism generally make difficult conceptions of a gender identity conducive to a positive pro-social adjustment. As a result, after leaving prison Black men may expect to encounter a host of micro and macro mechanism that prevent them from being “men” in their own eyes, particularly during the early phases of their release. Among the success themes this study’s respondents may voice are being a breadwinner (employment, housing, material goods),

establishing status and respect among their male peers, (re)establishing intimate relationships and family ties, and a general sense of health and well-being will emerge.

Psychological factors. The stigma of the incarceration experience marginalizes and negatively distinguishes people that enter prison from those they encounter once released. The released person is apt to feel psychologically handicapped, insignificant, and of little worth in the new environment. The lack of social and marketable skills may contribute to this feeling and result in depression or anger (Rose, Clear, & Ryder, 2001; Haney, 2006a). Moreover, the experience of a diminished autonomy may lead to sadness, depression, lethargy, or a sense of hopelessness. Some researchers have likened these characteristics to learned helplessness (Haney, 2006a; Herman, 1992; Schill & Marcus, 1998).

The fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR) (2000, p. 467 - 468) indicates that prisons are clearly places where a person may have been exposed to a distressing incident in which:

- the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others; or
- the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror, (where)
- a traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in one or more ways (e.g., recurrent or intrusive recollections, distressing dreams, etc.),
- persistent symptoms of increased arousal, (where)
- duration of the disturbance is more than one month, and
- (when) the disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (and, perhaps, other symptoms).

These are some of the features of posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD) according to the DSM. Those who have experienced prolonged and or repeated traumatization, multiple and perhaps more developed symptoms are likely to manifest (Herman, 1997).

There is also research indicating that persons released from prison may be suffering from disorders of extreme stress not otherwise specified (DESNOS) (Herman, 1997). Similar to the signs of DESNOS, Herman (1992; 1997) and other scholars (van der Kolk, et al., 2005) would agree that persons held in a state of physical captivity, and those incarcerated in a state or federal prison or jail, have been exposed to a prolonged period of control by others; have altered the way they think about themselves; have been forced to change their relations with others; and have developed alternative systems of coping and meaning making.

It is likely that many returning from prison exhibit behaviors indicative of an adjustment disorder (Graffam, & Shinkfield, 2012; Jones & Wessely, 2010) as defined by the American Psychiatric Association (2000). They are apt to show signs of “a psychological response to an identifiable stressor or stressors that result in the development of clinically significant emotional or behavioral symptoms” (p. 679). An adjustment disorder is likely to follow an important change in a person’s life (Carta, Balestrieri, Murru & Hardoy, 2009) and is not uncommon or peculiar to people returning from prison, although measures and reports of its pervasiveness are likely to fluctuate widely (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). A diagnosis of an adjustment disorder must follow the life stressor within three months of occurrence (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Carta, Balestrieri, Murru & Hardoy, 2009). Some researchers found that that substantial numbers of people returning from prison are apt to experience adjustment disorders within the first six months following release as a result of the multiple social and economic challenges the face coupled with their recollections of the prison

experience. Combined, the likelihood of experiencing stress is increased, which, given the circumstances, is not unusual (Baillargeon, et al., 2009). For some, the experience of release is likely to make worse an already difficult situation given that hundreds of thousands of those in prison or jail had mental health issues (James & Glaze, 2006). People released from prison leave a structured and relatively *stable* environment to one with few if any controls. Often, this new *freedom* is hard to handle. Release is often accompanied with feelings of anxiety about the things to be encountered and these are exacerbated when *contro* is not quickly obtained. As a result, very real anxieties and increases in levels of stress are likely to ensue as the newly released make an effort to successfully navigate the new world (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001).

Given the issues confronted by former incarcerates post release, psychological well-being is likely to emerge as a theme in this study. The goal here is to determine what factors formerly incarcerated men will offer as indications of their well-being post-release by simply asking: “What does well-being mean to you?” If needed, the question could be reworded as: What does it mean to feel good? What does it mean to be okay or to be alright or to be good? What does it mean to be happy in life? (Sastre, 1999). There are, of course, varying approaches to defining psychological well-being (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). However, Ryff’s (1989, p. 1071) multi-dimensional conceptualization fits well with ideas already mentioned here and might serve as probes to my more general question. Thus, psychological well-being is conceptualized as the extent to which a person reports autonomy (self-determination, independence, and the regulation of behavior from within); environmental mastery (ability to choose or create environments through physical or mental activities); positive relationships with others (including intimacy and the guidance and direction of others); purpose in life (beliefs that give one the feeling there is purpose in and meaning to life); and the

realization of potential and self-acceptance (positive attitudes toward oneself including acceptance of self and of one's past life).

Program Needs. Without insights about the effects of the incarceration, few are able to understand the suffering, stress, psychic pain, or the psychological adjustments people in prison make to endure their incarceration. Many in prison do not receive counseling during the incarceration period to address these type issues, although some help may be provided those deemed mentally ill (Beck & Maruschak, 2001; Haney, 2006a). After prison, Haney (2006a) found little evidence of “meaningful transitional programs or counseling programs that are effectively designed to help prisoners identify and undo those aspects of their institutionalization that pose the greatest problems for them once released” (p.15) despite the expectation that they immediately adjust with few if any problems. This rush to *make it* post release only exasperates the effects of incarceration (Mbuba, 2012). Even when those released appear to *look okay*, they may be psychologically locked in an in-prison mindset and identity (Herman, 1992). Furthermore, few, if any, parole agencies and social service providers provide these kinds of supports. In the programs discuss below, there are that address this issue.

Exemplars. For example, one meta-analysis of reentry programming has shown that cognitive behavior therapies (CBT) are among the more important approaches used to reduce recidivism (Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007). However, these programs are not designed to help adjustment to life after prison or the psychological effects of incarceration. Instead, model programs using CBTs, such as The Reasoning and Rehabilitation Program, Moral Reconciliation Therapy, Aggression Replacement Training, Thinking for a Change, and others are designed to address “distorted cognition—self justificatory thinking, misinterpretation of social cues, displacement of blame, deficient moral reasoning, schemas of dominance and entitlement”

(Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007, p. 4). These approaches are rooted in the notion that something is *wrong* with the formerly incarcerated person while ignoring what may be *wrong* with the social and environmental factors the person encounters. It is possible that social and environmental factors deemed pathological would have a similar adverse effect on a person who has not experienced incarceration.

The lack of service reflecting an alternative approach that takes these contextual factors in consideration likely contributes to *failure* post release and may even limit life expectancy beyond those at highest risk of mortality from drug use. The reasons for these early deaths may be related to the psychic pain felt during incarceration and an inability to have accruing issues addressed. Those surviving prison may develop a sense of rage, self-hatred, and be at an increased risk of suicide because of suppressed anger culled after years of humiliation (Herman, 1992; Patterson, 2013). Mortality rates post-release are easily documented. However, the extent to which psychic pain is felt and or reported post prison is not known. These facts are troubling. All who have gone to prison are likely to have been changed by the experience to some degree during the era of mass incarceration. Most will be returning to prison. The individual effects of the prison experience, the overcrowding, the isolation endured, and their relationship to reentry outcomes are not yet fully understood. This is especially true when examining how these factors relate to the reintegration of African American men. In addition to suggesting that there are additional program needs for former incarcerates, these findings also suggest that the current level of programming is inadequate.

The US Negro Problem: The Integration of Freed Blacks

The emancipation proclamation officially ending slavery presented another problem, what to do with the newly freed men. Then President Lincoln would not have abolished slavery

if he thought he could win the Civil War without doing so. He signed legislation to do so following being convinced that freeing slaves would deprive the slaveholding states of the Confederate South their free labor and attract Blacks to fight on the side of the north (Smith, Sonnefield, & Pellow, 2013).

The integration of freed Blacks into the larger society was a process. In March 1865, the US Congress passed legislation establishing the Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, to aide poor whites and former African slaves as the American Civil War came to a close (DeBois, 1901; Everly, 1997; Freedmen & Southern Society Project, nd; National Archives, nd). The purpose of the act was to secure the issuance of basic material needs for the maintenance of the newly freed and their families. The National Archives (nd) described it as an act designed to alleviate suffering and serve as a:

relief effort and . . . unprecedented social reconstruction that would bring freed people to *full citizenship* (emphasis added). It issued food and clothing, operated hospitals and temporary camps, helped locate family members, promoted education, helped freedmen legalize marriages, provided employment, supervised labor contracts, provided legal representation, investigated racial confrontations, settled freedmen on abandoned or confiscated lands. . . . (para 2).

The newly freed slaves and whites impoverished as a result of the Civil War's devastation created a social problem. There were unprecedented numbers to attend to that were increasing by the day. Some four million slaves had suddenly gained their freedom and poor whites, numbers unknown, were without employment or the means to sustain themselves. As with the Bureau of old, the nation is faced with no ordinary matter of temporary relief. Hundreds of thousands of people leaving prison every year often enter society through program that are not designed to

facilitate their psycho-social adjustment. The extent to which they accomplish specific aims related to their designs are questionable given the rate at which those released recidivate.

Successful Reentry?: An Empirical Literature Review

A search of the databases (e.g. *Sage Journals and EBSCO integrated search*) of scholarly peer reviewed journal titles employing the phrases *prisoner reentry* and *successful prisoner reentry* produced a variety of offerings that made it difficult to detail state of the art components of reentry. In fact, the search raised questions about whether the exemplars presented below could cover the range of techniques, program components, and strategies used to address the reentry problem. Instead, the policies and programs found seemed “designed to help communities learn to live with the problem, not to cure it outright” (Bryne, 2004, p. 1).

Success after being incarcerated is indicated by whether a person released from prison manages to avoid re-arrest, new convictions, imprisonment for a new crime or imprisonment for violating the conditions of their release for varying lengths of time. Over time, two of three recidivate within three years (Langan & Levin, 2002) and three in four recidivate within five years (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014). Reviews and meta-analyses of reentry programs use reductions in rates of recidivism as their principle indicator of *success* (Raphael, 2011; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Visher & Travis, 2011; Wright, Zhang, Farabee & Braatz, 2014). These programs include in-prison activities directly linked to varying in-community services. Program examples include cognitive behavior therapy (CBT); substance abuse treatment; employment training and job assistance; and programs with a vocational or educational component (Raphael, 2011; Visher and Travis, 2011).

Programs that other scholars found successful in reducing recidivism were those able to fill a significant portion of a participant’s daily schedule with behavioral treatment strategies,

provide positive reinforcement for pro-social behavioral adaptations, and a pro-social environment that facilitated a healthy and legal lifestyle (Zhang, Roberts, & Callanan, 2006). Listwan and her colleagues (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006) found that adherence to principles of effective correctional intervention (risk assessment, targeting of criminogenic needs and delivery of services matched to the need) in phases (in prison, immediately at release, and as supportive aftercare) are likely to succeed when compared to people not receiving these programs or services.

The problem with an analysis based on rates of recidivism is that by definition it is an official designation that largely depends on state detection (Pew Center on the States, 2011). Alone, this criterion may not provide evidence that a formerly incarcerated person has, in addition to reentering society, been reintegrated during the period established by the justice industry. Furthermore, in addition to an individual's characteristic, community context, family, peers, and other factors already noted, recidivism is affected by state policies relating to post prison supports, housing, employment, educational opportunities, the terms of release and more (Visher & Travis, 2003).

Moreover, recidivism, reentry or reintegration are not the same. Rather than evidence of successful reentry, recidivism is at best an indicator of a program's accomplishments or an indication of "supervision policy than it is an indicator of criminal activity. . . (and is) not clearly associated with any interim goals or processes identified by theories of success on supervision" (Lynch, 2006, p. 406; Pew Center on the States, 2011). Besides, an indication of an agency's performance, success post-release based on recidivism may not be what a former incarcerate would see as a milestone. Some scholars have been critical of the reliance on recidivism as an indicator of success post release (Lynch 2006; Visher & Travis, 2003). Critical of this approach,

Lynch (2006) observed that a composite measurement of reintegration would include procedures requiring more complex indices because the concept is related to a range of indicators encompassing group attachments, unemployment data, child support payments, and other sources of data not linked with the justice system that would suggest being restored to a state of complete membership within the society or community. Such membership is possible to the extent that an individual reconnects with “the institutions of society” (Visher & Travis, 2003, p. 91). Despite being contested, recidivism remains the golden indicator of reentry success among legislators. In their review of theories and literature, Davis and his colleagues (2012, p. 5) identified six crimenogenic factors affecting recidivism including “substance abuse; employment; family support; type of friends; motivation to change; and age” that are either barriers to or facilitators of success. However, it is unlikely that the programs former incarcerates flock to can or will address each of these influences.

Regarding the search for best practices, Lynch (2006) warns that much of the research related to reentry includes flaws that make it nearly impossible to comprehend study results. For example, some researchers use labels meant to distinguish experimental and control groups that are unclear and that poorly identify, if at all, cumulative dosages of each service received by the experimental or control group. Lynch adds, “[m]uch of the research on reentry is not based on a theory of reentry. Much of it is descriptive and theorizing is often post hoc” (2006, p. 404). Although the search continues for empirical evidence to support a best practice framework, perhaps the study of reentry may not be wholly ready for experimental or quasi-experimental designs. This may be in part because the number and variety of factors having the potential to affect outcomes is too large and unmanageable (Lynch, 2006). Stahler and his colleagues (2013) remind us that some of the factors predictive of recidivism are more amenable to intervention

than others. For example, the *dynamic* predictors of recidivism that are the subject of intervention strategies are: “antisocial personality, procriminal attitudes, association with antisocial peers, social support for crime, substance abuse, poor family/marital relationships, school/work problems, (and) lack of prosocial recreational activities” (Stahler, et al., 2013, p. 3). These factors overlap with those noted by Davis and his colleagues (2012) discussed above. The more *static* predictors of recidivism include “criminal history, age, gender, and race” and may not be singled out for person-centered approaches (Stahler, et al., 2013, p. 3) because these factors may not be affected in any way.

Empirical research has moved beyond a focus on individual and social factors related to recidivism to include neighborhood context (Stahler, et al., 2013; Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Rose & Clear, 2003). This researcher assumes that the relationship between environment and crime holds when environment and recidivism among those recently released from prison are compared. Findings from these studies note that many return from prison to environments plagued with criminogenic factors (Stahler, et al., 2013). Kubrin and Stewart (2006) confirms that, despite the individual characteristics of people returning from prison, available community resources are likely determinate factors of recidivism: “those who return to disadvantaged communities recidivate more, while those who return to relatively affluent communities recidivate less” (p. 186). Overall, however, these studies have been few and the results have been mixed. Notwithstanding variations in approach, what is clear despite the plethora of reentry programming is that the failure rate as it relates to recidivism remains high, while the general public, researchers and practitioners alike continue to ask “what works?” More specifically, the search continues for the characteristics of “successful” reentry programs; the psychological characteristics of successful reentrants; for the factors that hinder or make reentry difficult; and

those likely to lead to success. In summary, the search continues for a “magic bullet,” some aspects of which are discussed below (Severson, Bruns, Veeh, & Lee, 2011).

Risk assessments. Research detailing the characteristics of recidivists that include static and dynamic factors reminds us that a cure-all type solution resulting in a significant impact on recidivism, success as is now defined, is unlikely (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 2006; Stahler, et al., 2013; Zamble & Quinsey, 2001). Instead, researchers recommend movement away from focusing on specific program objectives based on risk profiles as a program goal rather than perusing more comprehensive aims (Lynch, 2006; Severson, Bruns, Veeh, & Lee, 2011). As an alternative, scholars have argued that attention to individual needs, a hall mark of rehabilitation programs reminiscent of the medical model, are critical determinates of program success (Zhang, Roberts, & Callanan, 2006).

In their review of the literature, Severson and her colleagues (2011, p. 328) found that “[v]ariations in the integrity, dosage and duration of the interventions offered” and the use of a risk assessment to develop individualized post-release program plans were best suited to impact program success rates as we now know it. Andrews and Bonta (2010) also encourage program use of risk assessments to increase success. Specifically, in their review of 80 studies and hundreds of tests related to the extent of a programs’ adherence to the “Risk-Need-Responsivity” model, they found reductions in recidivism as much as 35%, particularly when in-community service delivery was compared to service deliver in residential programs; in-community programs had higher *success* rates. The model prescribes a tailored approach based on level of risk, level of need, and cognitive social learning practices (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Some research also suggest including an assessment of the “context” in which people are returned from prison including their social and resources networks (Kroner, Gray, & Goodrich, 2011). Visher

and Travis (2011, p. 112) concur in this regard, suggesting that “approaches with the largest impact on recidivism . . . are likely to require a combination of intensive supervision in the community with mandatory treatment programs tailored to individual needs.” This seems logical since those returning from prison have a variety of characteristics and their transition experiences are not the same (Visher & Travis, 2011). Nevertheless, some researchers pause when combining intensive supervision components in programs because these strategies often “employ new supervision technologies as opposed to helping or rehabilitation technologies” that lead to incarceration resulting from rule violations rather than new crimes (Austin, 2001, p. 315; Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006; Pappozzi & Gendreau, 2005).

Even with these concerns, the prevalence of multiple risk factors among reentrants encourages an approach that includes intensive supervision. As the impact of policies hatched during the era of mass incarceration are felt, the numbers of people leaving prison are likely to be older, have served more time than in the past, are poorly educated; have a history of substance use; be in poor physical and mental health; and have poor employment histories (Carson & Sabol, 2012; Visher & Travis, 2011). Given the dearth of opportunities to improve themselves while in-prison, those returning are likely to reenter society in the same or a worsen condition than when entering prison. Some researchers found that private prisons contributes to this trend as well, as fewer opportunities for programming meant to improve an incarcerate’s situation are found within these setting; these circumstances have the effect of increasing the likelihood of failure post-release and or recidivism (Duwe & Clark, 2013). Finding nothing definitive to hang their hats on, researchers continue to search for a reentry program designed for the particular needs and or characteristics of former incarcerates that might have a significant effect on recidivism (Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009).

Select programs: Aiming at recidivism. Definitions of what might be defined as a reentry program are likely to vary because of the number of ways “reentry” is conceptualized (Mauer, 2002; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002, Miller & Spillane, 2012; Petersilia, 2004; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis, 2002; Visser & Travis, 2011). Seiter and Kadela (2003, p. 368) group reentry programs into two halves of a whole: “correctional programs that focus on the transition from prison to community (prerelease, work release, halfway houses, or specific reentry programs) and programs that have initiated treatment (substance abuse, life skills, education, cognitive/behavioral, sex/violent offender) in a prison setting and have linked with a community program to provide continuity of care” and have been designed with the aim of reducing recidivism. Using these two categories to group programs, they evaluated 32 programs described as reentry programs to determine what worked, what did not, what was promising, and what was unknown. Once they decided to include an evaluation into their study as one of the two kinds of reentry program, programs in each of the two were organized into five broad types: vocational and work programs, drug rehabilitation, education, sex and violent offender programs, and prison pre-release programs. The focus of their analysis was to determine what impact program approaches had on recidivism.

Overall, results from Seiter and Kadela (2003) were positive but not definitive because, as they concluded, more evaluation of currently operating programs was needed. Even with this notation, they found among the vocational and work programs reviewed, that participants were provided job skills useful upon release and were less likely to recidivate, but the difference in rates of recidivism was not statistically significant. They found that drug treatment programs worked, that is, the programs they evaluated showed statistically significant differences in rates of recidivism and rates of drug relapse. There were mixed results among half-way house

program participants although they concluded the programs worked to ease the transition from prison; that is, participants completed more positive activities (finding and holding a job, being self-supporting, and participating in self-improvement programs), but the differences were not statistically significant. Conversely, halfway house participants were less likely (statistically significant) to engage in criminal activities. Similarly, among the prison pre-release programs they evaluated, participants recidivated at lower rates compared to non-program participants, but the differences were not statistically significant. The results from education programs were mixed as well; program participants made educational gains but varied little in rates of return to prison compared to those who did not participate in similar programs. Finally, they concluded that treatment programs targeting sex offenders had an impact on rates of recidivism and were promising, especially among those deemed low risk. However, the results were not statistically significant (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). The authors caution that these few programs should not preclude additional evaluation of these and other program models.

Boston Reentry Initiative. Using rates of recidivism to determine its success, the Boston Reentry Initiative (BRI) received attention for its attempt to target *high risk* male incarcerates between the ages of 18 and 32, specifically gang members, those currently involve in gang violence, likely victims or perpetrators of gun violence, and other characteristics related to an extensive criminal background (Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009). Program participants were provided in-prison caseworkers, mentors from the community, and were enrolled within programming tailored to individual needs while in prison. As a condition of their release, supervising agencies required participation in BRI. After prison, BRI participation included mentoring, case management, and programming related to participant needs. To assess the effectiveness of this program approach, “a nonrandomized quasi-experimental design was used

to compare recidivism patterns among BRI participants to the recidivism patterns of an equivalent control group” (Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009, p. 420). Results of the study indicated that over time gaps between the control and experimental group narrowed. At year two, 67.6 % of BRI, and 78.0 % of the control had been arrested for a new crime; after three years, 77.8 % of BRI participants had been arrested for a new crime, while 87.7 % of comparison group subjects had been arrested for a new crime. The number of recidivists in both groups was very high. However, when compared to each other there was a 30 percent reduction in re-arrest for violent crime among BRI participants than the comparison group (Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009). These findings suggest that when recidivism is used as a measure of success, positive results are possible even among high-risk populations; however, the reductions as show here tend to be small.

Preventing Parolee Failure Program. The California Department of Corrections’ Preventing Parolee Failure Program (PPFP), is another example of a program approach that used recidivism as its measure of success (Zhang, et al., 2006). Zhang, et al, (2006) evaluated the PPFP, a multidimensional, parole-based reintegration program that uses a network of services providers to support delivery of services in four areas: employment, substance abuse education and recovery, math and literacy skill development, and housing. Overall, they found a small reduction in recidivism (8%) when PPFP participants were compared to non-PPFP people on parole. Their results showed that increased program involvement within the four domains noted above and or the meeting of program goals within these areas widened the gap between PPFP and non-PPFP participants, but the reasons for increased participation were unclear.

Parole based approach. Ostermann (2013) found notable differences in rates of recidivism in what might be called a parole-based approach. His research compared persons

released on parole with those who were also released to a parole agency but were actively supervised for varying periods following their release. The distinction between the two categories is rooted in differences in the way parole is actually defined: “conditional and unconditional. . . . People with a “conditional release” status spend a portion of their court-imposed sentence in the community (being supervised by a parole officer/community supervision officer), whereas people with “unconditional releases” leave prison at the end of their sentence without any further requirements” (Austin, 2001; Ostermann, 2013, p. 489). In general, those supervised while on parole were less likely to recidivate compared to those on parole who were not supervised, at least while being supervised. However, Ostermann (2013) found that the parole supervision effect did not last as long as might be expected because of agency-focus during the supervision period.

Researchers have found that community supervision (parole) agencies tend to act like quasi-police forces that aim to keep “those under their supervision crime free [in programs that merely act as] . . . diversionary tools that provide pseudoincapacitation in the community” rather than as entities focused upon community integration and a crime free life-style well beyond the supervisory period (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006; Ostermann, 2013, p. 505; Raphael, 2011). Paparozzi and Gendreau (2005) concluded that intensive supervision as a strategy works to reduce recidivism, but note a substantial increase in the percentage of people who were sent back to prison for technical rule violations related to the conditions of their release, a tactic “promoted as the successful avoidance of new crimes even though there is no evidence to support this belief” (p.460).

Other models. Programs not linked with community supervision reported to have an effect on recidivism include the Creating Lasting Family Connections designed to strengthen

family cohesion and support related to recovery issues (McKiernan, Shamblen, Collins, Strader, & Kokoski, 2012); programs that use logotherapy to treat addiction (Shrum, 2004); Circles of Support and Accountability, a program design to aid sex offenders by providing social support (Duwe, 2012); and in prison education programming (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, & Knutson, 2012). In addition, there are emerging strategies rooted in positive psychology linked with the treatment of sex-offenders such as the *good lives model* (Ward & Brown, 2004). The good lives model is a strength-based approach that assists in securing what Ward and Brown (2004) describe as “primary goods.” Primary goods are “intrinsically beneficial . . . (and) represent an individual’s core values and life priorities” (Ward, Yates, & Willis, 2012, p. 95). Ward and colleagues have proposed 11 classes of primary goods related to the good life: (a) life (including healthy living and functioning), (b) knowledge, (c) excellence in play, (d) excellence in work (including mastery experiences), (e) excellence in agency (i.e., autonomy and self-directedness), (f) inner peace (i.e., freedom from emotional turmoil and stress), (g) friendship (including intimate, romantic, and family relationships), (h) community, (i) spirituality (in the broad sense of finding meaning and purpose in life), (j) happiness, and (k) creativity” (Ward, et al., 2012, p. 95). The good lives approach seeks to identify variables meant to facilitate “health, well-being, and meaning” including “satisfying work, helping others, being a good citizen, developing spirituality and integrity, realizing potential, and self-regulating impulses” (Wormith, et al., 2007, p. 886).

Using an entirely different approach, Wright and his colleagues (Wright, et al., 2014) begin their review of 35 evaluations of 29 community-based reentry programs conducted between 2000 and 2010, defining programs that *work* as those “that make a significant, positive impact on the lives of participants (p. 37). This aim, a more humanistic approach that seeks to

improve the *quality of life* post-prison, differs from the more general aims of programs that primarily focus on recidivism or relapsing into drug use. Wright, et al.'s appraisal of programs included those seeking to obtain these traditional outcomes but also included programs seeking employment outcomes and a few others, for example housing, life skills, and education. In their review they sought to learn what types of programs and the components they included, which were capable of obtaining these outcomes and make "meaningful changes in the lives of ex-prisoners?" (2014, p. 39). Program features that were likely to yield positive results were those that provided "housing assistance and the inclusion of an aftercare component" and those that did not fare as well were those that employed some form of cognitive behavior therapy (Wright, et al., 2014, p. 51). As a result of the numerous problems faced by persons returning from prison, it is improbable that uni-dimensional program approaches will have the desired effect on recidivism as current data show. It remains that only a third of those released do not recidivate within three years of release; one in four do not recidivate within five years (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014; Langan & Levin, 2002; Lattimore, Steffey, & Visser, 2010; Wormith, et al., 2007).

Multi-pronged approaches. Perhaps in acknowledgement of the limitations of one dimensional program models, scholarship supports the idea that reductions in recidivism are possible following multi-pronged or multi-faceted approaches that include provisions for "personal and tangible supports" (Severson, Bruns, Veeh, & Lee, 2011, p. 330) designed to counter barriers to reentry and offset collateral consequences associated with incarceration (Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002).

Personal supports. Researchers have shown that factors identified as facilitators of success are at times barriers. Martinez and Abrams (2011) found that young people returning

from prison have peers that are just as likely to be sources of temptation and, for those doing well, sources of inspiration. In addition, family members likely to provide material and emotional support may also be sources of stress resulting from pressure to meet their expectations.

In other literature, Bucklen and Zajac's (2009) report on parole violators (PVs) and parole successes (PSs) found a statistically significant relationship between a pro-social support network and recidivism when the two groups were compared. A parole success was defined as "a person on parole for at least three years with no violations or other return to incarceration . . . which corresponds to the 3-year benchmark for recidivism . . . (used by) state correctional agencies and the federal government" (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009, p. 245, 246). Research by others support this finding and suggest that former incarcerates might form new identities related to success when interacting with pro-social individuals (Fox, 2010). When seeking to distinguish those who successfully completed parole from those who had not, Bahr and his colleagues (2010) found that higher percentages of those who did not return to prison compared to those that did (85% vs 70%) counted their family as a helpful. In addition they found that "those who spent more time participating in enjoyable activities with (pro-social) friends were more likely to succeed on parole" (2010, p. 681). Bucklen and Zajac (2009) also found that PVs who were re-incarcerated tended to associate with justice involved individuals while on parole. Bahr, et al., (2010) suggest that PVs association with justice involved friends resulted from not having opportunities to be with positive people, which, when feeling alone left them vulnerable to negative influences. Bucklen and Zajac (2009) suggest that PSs were likely to live with a pro-social spouse or significant other and had what they described as a good relationship. Bahr, et al. (2010, p. 683, 684) indicated that PVs reported having "strained and less relationships" with

their families, while PSs said that “families helped them succeed.” These findings are well supported by principles related to social learning theory, which suggest that behavioral motivations are learned through associations with significant others (Akers, 2009; Bahr, et al., 2010).

Tangible supports. When seeking more tangible supports, participants in focus groups conducted by Luther and his colleagues (2011) that included adult men and women recently returned from jail and prison indicated that their inability to acquire personal and state identification, employment, transportation and mandatory supervision fees were barriers to their success. There is research suggesting that structural factors such as employment and housing resulting from scarce opportunities and scant community resources may not be the key impediments to successful reentry as is often suggested (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009). Attitudes and beliefs were important distinctions between the PVs and PSs. For example, although PSs were significantly more likely than PVs to report stable employment post release, PSs evidenced greater job satisfaction, more positive attitudes toward work and a commitment towards employment even in low wage jobs. In addition, PVs had greater difficulty than did PSs managing their day to day affairs including financial management (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009). Bahr, et al. (2012) also found that having a job did not distinguish successful and unsuccessful people on parole although employment is a strong predictor of parole success. Instead, success was related to the quality of the job, attitudes toward work and the number of hours worked; their findings regarding work and attitude were similar to those reported by Bucklen and Zajac (2009). Finally, as might be expected, there were differences in alcohol or other drug use between the groups. Although PVs and PSs were equally as likely to have been deemed substances abusers when admitted to prison, PVs were more likely to have used alcohol or other drugs while on

parole than PSs (Bahr, et al., 2010; Bucklen & Zajac, 2009). While most of the emphasis is on program success indicated by rates of recidivism, it is important to note why some programs fail to produce intended results.

Weak program effect. A number a scholars found that some programs do not obtain the desired reductions in rates of recidivism because of problems associated with implementing the intended design (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006; Lattimore, Steffey, & Visher, 2010; Wilson & Davis, 2006). Visher and Travis (2011, p. 114) discovered that the more “common implementation problems include ineffective delivery of services, poor matching of individual needs to program content, and failure to incorporate established principles for effective rehabilitative programming.” This notation is not meant to suggest that program participants fail because programs fail them. Instead, it points out that efforts to implement complex program designs intended to address a plethora of needs are more difficult than often imagined. It seems that complex program approaches seek reductions in recidivism indirectly by targeting factors know to be associated with positive post-prison results, for example, employment, substance abuse, CBT, and other intermediate outcomes. Lattimore and her colleagues (2010) did not find theoretical or empirical guidance supporting a program design that focused on intermediate outcomes, nor did they find substantial reductions in recidivism based on this model. In fact, they argue that programs designed to obtain intermediate outcomes may not affect wayward behavior as these, for example, obtaining a job, may not be related to recidivism or reductions in criminal behavior (Lattimore, Steffey, & Visher, 2010). As a result, after the “most comprehensive evaluation of reentry programming ever undertaken,” despite the showing of improvements in program results, the ability of current efforts to substantially reduce rates of recidivism remain doubtful (Lattimore, Steffey, & Visher, 2010, p. 264). In their *How to Prevent Prisoner Re-entry*

Programs From Failing, Listwan and her colleagues (2006, p. 22) report that “[p]rograms that fail to develop clear goals and objectives, use effective classification systems, rely on appropriate theoretically relevant models, and plan for relapse will inevitably falter.” Over all, programs unable to demonstrate *success* based the impact on recidivism and cost (although cost and return on investment are rarely mentioned) are likely to result in being described as failures. Combined, these concerns suggest a need to shift focus elsewhere (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006).

Rationale for giving attention to the individual’s perspective. The fact that the largest percentage of those returned from prison eventually recidivate points to the need to consider alternative perspectives. Approaches related to the reintegration of people leaving prison have consistently focused on the relationship between reintegration post prison and structural factors, access to basic necessities, dynamic predictors, and common static or personal factors, including age, gender and others, human and social capital (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009; Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst, & Bratton, 2011; Stahler, et al., 2013; Wang, Hay, Todak, & Bales, 2013).

Literature related to the process of reentry of repatriates offers insights that may relate to the experiences of formerly incarcerated people as they attempt to reintegrate into their communities (Szkudlarek, 2010). Szkudlarek’s (2010) review offers three theoretical frameworks from which to examine reentry as it relates to the individual including affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of the process. The mental and emotional after-effects (affective aspects) of reentry are well documented and suggest that the majority of reentrants experience a range of discomforts upon returning home which often prove to be among their greatest challenges. These experiences are likely to include grief, distress, frustration, anger, depression, adjustment disorders, PTSD, and anxiety resulting from unanticipated difficulties as

a result a general lack of preparation for the experience. The cognitive aspect of reentry relates to what reentrants expect reentry to be like and the actual experience. The realization that home has changed as well as the reentrant may have an effect upon adjustment. Moreover, this research suggests that the realization of how changed the reentrant is may influence how they self-identify and their sense of belonging home. Finally, the review suggests that upon reentry, reentrants need to learn behaviors deemed *normal* at home that may have been set aside while away, and discard behaviors learned while away. This learning and unlearning may affect the reintegration process.

This brief reference to reentry of repatriates exposes some of the limitation of traditional reentry models based on recidivism as the indicator of success. Programs designed to address basic material needs have their own shortcomings: they sometimes neglect important psychological needs known to influence reintegration. None of the reentry models found in the published literature addresses the psychology of Black masculinity as a factor in reentry. The issues related to repatriates are not the same as those experienced by formerly incarcerated people. Additional research is needed to examine this phenomenon from the individual perspective. What individual issues are related to positive reintegration? For example, in the era of hyper-incarceration, is successful reintegration related to Black men's sense of masculinity, manhood and identity? Cooper (2013) suggests that an analysis of how black men self-identify, understand the identities attributed to Black men, particular the notion of the "dangerous-black-man stereotype," and how these are evaluated and responded to by black men may impact the reintegration of this self in a society such as ours where race matters. In addition to the effect of black male identity, the extent returning men self-identify with prison labels may also be relevant. On this point other research suggests that formed individual and group identities may

affect behavior as individuals attempt to navigate social situations (Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010). This review attempts to lay the ground work for possible themes that may emerge from those who have lived the experience as they recount the obstacles and challenges they overcame and the things that made possible their not returning to prison.

Defining success. The meaning of the word success is unclear and researchers in a number of fields have not reached consensus on its meaning as a technical term (Bercovitch, 2007; Heslin, 2005). Sociologist working on issues related to welfare reform (Lichter & Jayakody, 2002), juvenile justice scholars (Peters & Myrick, 2011), those working on matters related to substance abuse (Lee & Zerai, 2010), mental health professionals (Perkins, 2001), and others (Ebner & Freund, 2007; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000) have all struggled with a conceptual definition for success.

Scholars stress assessing success in terms of goal attainment or progress toward an idea or object no matter the context (Axford, Hockings, & Carter, 2008; Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Common definitions of success suggest that it is the result of getting or achieving something socially desirable (for example, wealth or status) within a defined timeframe or other parameters (WebFinance, Inc, 2016), the accomplishment of some goal (Dictionary.com, 2016), and or a favorable outcome after some effort or endeavor (Merriam-Webster, 2016). Considering the aforementioned deprivations endured during the incarceration experience, success is here conceptualized as a material, social or psychological outcome respectively and at once. That is, success after prison may be defined as material success, the acquisition of physical measurable items like income (Hofstede, 1984; Wirtz & Scollon, 2012); social success, satisfying peer relationships and acceptance among peers (Jarvinen & Nicholls, 1996; Rose & Rudolph, 2006),

and psychological success – positive feeling about the self and or well-being (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Ryff, 2013).

Researchers suggest gender differences in how success is defined (Enke & Ropers-Huilman, 2010; Hofstede, 1984). Because men are socialized to be breadwinners, “it would not be surprising if masculine definitions of success centered on the provision of material goods” (Dyke & Murphy, 2006, p. 358). Women, on the other hand, are expected to be successful in domestic settings. “Their prescribed roles cluster around caring for others and nurturing relationships” (Dyke & Murphy, 2006, p. 358). Research on formerly incarcerated women describes women’s efforts to resume their maternal or other caretaker roles. These are key factors, among others, relating to how they define success (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Heidemann, Cederbaum, & Martinez, 2016). Although gender roles have changed in recent years (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Risman & Davis, 2013), differences in socialization may still lead men to see success in material and social-status terms, rather than in relational and family terms (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Moreover, men’s definitions and pursuit of success are likely influenced by cultural values suggesting, “men are to be assertive, ambitious and competitive and strive for material success” (Hofstede, 1984. p.390; Wirtz & Scollon, 2012).

Despite the complexity of the issues raised here success may be best understood as a multi-faceted subjective concept (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Severson, Bruns, Veeh, & Lee, 2011; Szkudlarek, 2010; Waitley, 2016; Wos 2014). Even so, Waitley (2016) and Wos (2014, p.7) would agree that success has become “synonymous with material possessions” that are easily measured and compared, for example, material success based on income (Wirtz & Scollon, 2012). It is likely that Black men released from prison begin their transition with few possessions and view success as the acquisition of things they were

deprived during their incarceration including material possessions, social relationships, and well-being (Sykes, 1958). The deprivations endured during confinement (Haney, 2004; Johnson, 1992) may influence the subjective definitions of success former incarcerates are apt to articulate.

This review also points to one of the challenges for those in the field of social work – the responsibility to be more involved.

Social Work and Reentry

The more punitive approach to crime and justice involved populations that gained popularity during the era of mass incarceration, and that are at the root of the reentry problem faced today was led, in part, by academics from the behavioral and social sciences (Davis, 2009; Ryan, 2011; Weisberg, 2012). Despite having a history that can be traced back to the 1800s of work with young and adult violators of the law, as well as victims of crime (Roberts & Brownell, 1999; Roberts, Springer, & Brownell, 2007), social work scholars seemed to have resigned from the debate about punishment and left the field to criminologist and others. Moreover, social work scholars have had narrow leadership roles, if any, “in formulating service delivery policies, procedures, and long-term reforms at high level national (or state-level) strategic planning for system-wide service delivery” within the criminal justice arena (Wilson, 2010, p. 4). As a result, criminologist and others have had their way in “refocus[ing justice] . . . work toward the safety and security of society and away from the traditional values of the social work profession in empowering individuals and building community capacity” (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier & Sinha, 2008, p. 191). Justice involved people have been among the most overlooked and devalued of groups despite the social work professional commitment to marginalized and oppressed people (Roberts & Brownell, 1999). Without activism on behalf of those affected by shifts in policy and

a strong counter voice, the creation of a more punitive justice environment was perhaps inevitable (van Wormer, Springer & Maschi, 2012).

This review indicates that penal policies of the past have increased the propensity of *new criminals* to commit crimes once released partly because prisons often do function as crime schools (DeFina & Hannon, 2010; Haney, 2006a; Mbuba, 2012; Reasons & Kaplan, 1975). The more recent criminal justice approaches have not led to a noticeable impact on crime rates (Harcourt, 2012; Vito & Maahs, 2012). Harcourt (2012) found “little evidence to support the claim that broken-windows policing (policing of deteriorating neighborhoods) contributed (to a) decrease in crime (p.10); that stop and frisk, racial, and other forms of profiling used as crime fighting strategies are “likely counterproductive to the crime fighting goal” (p. 19), and in some instances (using this logic to fight terrorism), lead to new recruits and or new strategies to engage in criminal acts. He observed (Harcourt, 2012) that incarceration strategies, for example, selective incapacitation, incarcerating high-risk offenders for longer periods of time, did decrease crime among those selected for incarceration by virtue of their incarceration, but the strategy seemed to contribute more to increasing the number of people in prison. Moreover, these policies have evidenced little concern about the harm done to those punished, guilty or not (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Ellis, 2003). They have also resulted in an increase in the incarceration of persons convicted of nonviolent crimes (Gilpin, 2012; Strutin, 2012). Overall, punishment, particularly prison sentences have become harsher during this time (Banks, 2013; Bosworth, 2005). As a result of these policies, reentry presents a challenge to the social work field because of the debilitating effect of the longer sentences, mental health issues, questions about the effectiveness of strategies designed to facilitate community reintegration, and the

punitive atmosphere in which justice work is carried out (van Wormer, Springer & Maschi, 2012).

The prison experience, the hardship of reintegrating in areas that are characteristically poor and that provide little economic opportunity challenge social workers to develop sound arguments, policies, and interventions that address these needs as well as the stress endured during the incarceration experience (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier & Sinha, 2008). To meet these challenges, Cnaan and colleagues (2008) and others (Wilson, 2010) suggest that social workers need to renew their commitment to working with people in prison and those who are attempting to reintegrate into the community. Those in the social work field also need to assert their leadership in the justice system and on justice issues as society enters a new stage brought on by this current crisis and to facilitate successful reintegration.

Summary

This literature review provides a historical context in which to view the incarceration of Black men in the US. It supports the position that the incarceration of Black men at disproportionate rates is a long-standing practice. It includes a summary of relevant research related to the racialization of crime or the criminalization of Blackness and the implications these have for the post release experiences of Black men. The review also provides a historical background from which to examine contemporary theories of punishment and points related to the theoretical meaning of punishment. The theoretical justifications for punishment reviewed include retribution, incapacitation, general and specific deterrence, and rehabilitation.

The changes in penal philosophy that began in the 1970s encouraged movement away from rehabilitation as a punishment goal toward a more punitive posture and consequently led to the era of mass (hyper) incarceration and the problem of reentry. The ideological shifts in

sentencing policy during this period were aided by the theoretical justifications for punishments produced by academics. In general, punishment policies during the era of mass incarceration were designed to *hurt*.

This review indicates that the in-prison adaptations of the incarcerated and the resultant psychological effects of incarceration are likely to manifest post release in features indicative of PTSD, DESNOS, or in behaviors indicative of an adjustment disorder. What is clear is that few people in prison are able to understand the suffering, stress or psychic pain they feel, or the psychological adjustments they are made to endure during their incarceration. In addition, despite the wide range of reentry programming currently in operation, there is a shortage of programs, if any, designed to help people recognize and address their institutionalization while in or after leaving prison, that perhaps may inhibit post-release adjustment.

The post-release experience of adjusting is complicated by problems related to individualized stigma and the stigma assigned to the families of former incarcerates. It is also complicated by continued identification with a criminal life or the incarceration experience; financial strain; strained interpersonal and social relationships post-release; and additional barriers to reintegration often dubbed invisible punishments [employment, access to affordable (public) housing, public assistance, voter disenfranchisement, parole (community supervision), racism and Black masculinity].

The empirical literature lacks evidence of any attempt to estimate or address the psychological effects of incarceration or of the psychological effects post release. The dynamic, static and contextual factors predictive of recidivism provide insights about the targets of current program designs, but these do not include psychological factors. This review raises questions on whether recidivism should remain the primary indicator of success given current program

designs. There is a lack of consensus on whether prisoner reentry programs work to address the problem as defined. Given this paucity, the review highlights the importance of including the subjective perspectives of formerly incarcerated people as a means of gaining insights about their lived experiences and their perspective about post release success given its subjective nature. It concludes offering a challenge to those involved in social work to assert their leadership in the justice system and on justice issues as society enters a new stage brought on by this current crisis and to facilitate successful reintegration.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

To investigate post-prison outcomes of urban African American men, my plan of inquiry for this exploratory research emphasizes the lived experience of Black men. Often people who study and report on the experiences of incarceration and reentry have never experienced prison, and thus we know little about prison from the perspective of formerly incarcerated Black men even though Black men are overrepresented in state and federal prisons. Several qualitative exemplars referred to earlier provided some insights from former incarcerates, but the samples of these are mostly comprised of Caucasians men (Bahr, Harris, Fisher & Armstrong, 2010; Bahr, et al., 2005; Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2012; Miller and Spillane, 2012). A qualitative approach for this study will enable me to explore the experiences of formerly incarcerated African American men, capture the meaning they assign to their in-prison and post-prison experiences and their meaning of success post release.

Researcher's Position

Moustakas (1994) suggests that there is often a relationship between the researcher's personal history and the crux of the problem under investigation. Often the personal experience leads to the research question. While researchers are encouraged to acknowledge and restrain personal feelings that may influence their research activities, their values influence research interest, methods, and interpretation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, it is essential for the researcher to inform readers *up-front* of their life experiences as they relate to the study (Kilbourn, 2006).

After spending 32 years under correctional supervision, 25 years in prison and 7 in community supervision (parole), I wanted to better understand what happened to me while under

supervision. I sought words to describe what I felt in prison. I wondered about the psychological impact of the incarceration and how that experience related to the life I was living post release, including my personal relationships. Now I question how others have been affected and about the impact that the experience is having on their lives and life outcomes.

In addition, I have extensive experience as the executive director of a small not-for-profit organization with a mission to restore all the rights and attributes of citizenship to the formerly incarcerated following completion of their sentences. Much of the work of the organization is informed by social work principles, particularly its mission “to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (Assembly, 1999). As a professional, I have personal experience with the phenomena of the study and in my interactions with formerly incarcerated people, their issues, and their concerns.

Taken together, these personal experiences have made me sympathetic to the struggles formerly incarcerated Black men endure in an environment plagued by the “sociostructural facets of inequality” and worsening racial attitudes toward them (Richeson & Sommers, 2016, p. 447). My experience also led to this study of the experiences others have had since their release. Whereas previous research has focused on recidivism as a success criterion, which emphasizes the priorities of institutional stakeholders in the justice industry, I assume a strengths perspective. I seek to understand how the assets of former incarcerates contribute to their success, the extent to which they achieved it post-release, the strategies employed maintaining positive mental health or that which they believe is needed to achieve it.

Methodology: Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach

The Grounded Theory Method (GTM) emphasizes the importance of subjective meaning,

interpretation and their relationship to social interaction (Annells, 1996). GTM includes the simultaneous collection and analysis of data (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2012; Patton 2002). Glaser and Strauss (1967) are credited for GT's initial development, but since then others have taken the concept further (Charmaz, 2006; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2012; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Padgett, 2008). The GTM is primarily an inductive approach that includes thematic coding of data and memo writing to record researcher decision making and impressions, all of which are used to develop theoretical explanations related to a lived experience (Hall & Callery, 2001; Padgett, 2008).

This study consists of a *constructivist* grounded theory (CGT) approach proposed by Charmaz (2006). CGT moves beyond traditional grounded theory in that it includes a process of inquiry from which data are fashioned through interactions between the interviewer and interviewee, while emphasizing flexibility in the process (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2012). Data from this study was developed from semi-structured interviews between the researcher and study participants. The CGT approach positioned me as author and interpreter of the data constructed during interviews with research participants and led to the discovery of a shared reality among them (Annells, 1996; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). I am also acknowledging my *insider* experience and the likelihood it informed my perspective as an interpreter of the data. The knowledge I obtained from my personal history of incarceration aided me as a researcher, enhanced my understanding of the experiences of study participants, and minimized the researcher-participant hierarchy (Annells, 1996; McGeorge, 2011; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). By discussing my interpretations with my dissertation committee members, and others with and without an experience of incarceration, I believe I have minimized any bias due to my personal life experience, which could include being less critical or over-identified with the

respondents in this study.

I experienced my understanding of the prison experience as a major asset in establishing rapport, and minimize the hierarchy between me and my participants. It allowed for a more open exchange and mutual self-disclosure; dialog and self-disclosure often elicit information participants would not otherwise reveal and was a good method for establishing trust and rapport (Houston, 2008). This approach proved true during my pilot study as well. During the pilot, I was made privy to information that a respondent said he would be reluctant to share with others.

INTERVIEWER: Health wise, how do you feel?

INTERVIEWEE: You know. I'm going to tell you. I don't know if you heard that I had cancer, did you?

INTERVIEWER: No.

INTERVIEWEE: I had cancer. One of the worst cancers that you can have. Cancer of the penis.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

During the main study, I believe my participants spoke freely about their experiences (Polizzi & Maruna, 2010).

Overall, CGT offered a strategy for this research that included procedures for exploring individual interpretations of the incarceration and transition experiences of formerly incarcerated African American men. This approach allowed for authentic elucidations about what happened and how the men made sense and meaning of their experiences. To gather this information, I engaged in face-to-face interviews with participants.

Pilot Study

Before fully engaging in this research, I conducted a pilot study to further refine the interview protocol and sampling strategy (Blessing, Chakrabarti, & Blessing, 2009). My purpose was to determine whether my approach would strike a chord with Black men who had not recidivated since their release and to confirm my choice of interview terminology. At the conclusion of these interviews, I asked if respondents had found any of the questions odd or confusing and if I had missed any topics that were an important part of their reentry. The study proved a helpful way to gain insight and feedback from men who would be similar to my research participants.

After receiving IRB approval for the pilot, I broadcasted an email, using the email database of the community-based organization of which I am the executive director. The email included a general announcement about my research, its aims, and asked for participation. In addition, the content of this email was posted on social media outlets (e.g. Facebook and LinkedIn). The men volunteered to participate without my approaching them. This stage of the procedure mimicked steps for securing a self-selected sample of Black men wishing to volunteer for the study. Following an offer to participate, volunteers were screened to ensure insure that they meet the criteria established for participation before interviews were scheduled. Those meeting the criteria were accepted, those that did not were rejected.

Subsequently, I collected qualitative data from four Black men meeting the eligibility criteria for the study. When interviewed for the study, the ages of the men ranged between 60 and 79. Their ages at the start of their incarceration ranged between 21 and 42, or an average of 28 years old; age at release ranged from 33 to 67, or an average of 47. For these men, the length of time served in prison ranged between 5 and 33 years, averaging 18 years of incarceration. On

average, the men have been in the community nearly 16 years since completing their sentences. Three of the men were married and living with their spouses, and one lived alone.

I subjected the interviews to an informal analysis. Surprisingly, issues of character and social acceptance loomed larger than I expected, relative to concerns relating to material needs and wants. For example, one of the men said, “[Success], it’s internal. What I’m gonna refer to now is something that is internal to people. Not so much the money; not so much the recognition; those things help.” One of the other Black men in the pilot said

I did not know what it [success] meant when I first got out. Besides having a job, having a family life, having a social life, friends I believe it has to do with becoming, in many ways, invisible what I mean by that is when I tell someone that I’ve been to prison, they don’t believe me. . . . Success has a lot to do with the presentation [of self], the polish, being accepted by people who normally wouldn’t accept you.

Similarly, spirituality, self-determination, autonomy, and psychological themes emerged.

Employment and having social supports were mentioned. One respondent said that finding “love” and getting married were significant aspects of his success.

The pilot data also revealed information about post-prison experiences; at least two respondents mentioned overcoming stigma during their interviews. Referring to people who had spent time in prison, one participant reported, “They have that stain. . . . That stain you have involves your children. You can’t lay the groundwork for them [because of the incarceration]. They start out in a bad situation right behind you.” One of the other men in the pilot spoke about stigma this way: “[There is] the general population’s concept of you as a [formerly incarcerated] person and then you compound that by adding that he is Black too. . . . [that thinking] it affects you.”

A number of other themes emerged from discussions about in-prison experiences and its relationship to post-prison success including in-prison educational opportunities and self-

reflection, becoming self-aware, sensitive, or self-conscious, and how these related to character rather than acquiring material things.

The men interviewed confirmed the appropriateness of the terminology I used, for example, for well-being. Universally, the men used the notion of *okay* or *good* to describe their state as content and happy. From this point, I was in a good position to probe them to elaborate on what they meant by these terms. With respect to his well-being one of the men said,

It's a certain recognition that you give to yourself; a certain satisfaction that you have in yourself that you (can) say I'm on track....that tells you, you on the right track, that helps you feel well about yourself. I feel good about myself.

These initial findings have broadened my perspective about the meaning of success for former incarcerates, given the emergence of the themes noted above compared to success defined as staying out of prison more than three years.

The Main Study

My study sample. For this study, I recruited formerly incarcerated self-identified US born Black men. None had recidivated since their release from prison.

Sampling strategy. I employ a mixed sampling strategy to recruit 13 formerly incarcerated Black men as participants, in addition to the four interviewed during the pilot study. As in the pilot, this was an ideal approach because of the recruitment challenges and need to be flexible given the population from which the sample was being drawn (Creswell, 2007; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). Black men who believed they were eligible to participate, contacted me asking if they could participate in the study. After being contacted, I screened potential study participants to determine if they met the eligibility requirements. If they did, an interview was scheduled.

I mimicked snowball-sampling procedures throughout my recruitment. Confirmed members of the population of interest identified through my network and recruitment efforts were asked to inform others about the study. I also asked those responding but not interviewed to inform those they thought may be interested in participating in the study. Snowball sampling is useful when potential participants are not readily apparent or otherwise inaccessible (Abrams, 2010; Creswell, 2007; Padgett, 2008).

Recruiting procedures: I began recruitment by using the same procedures employed during my pilot study. I broadcasted an email using the email database of the community-based organization of which I am the executive director. The email included a general announcement (see Appendix C) about my research, its aims, and asked for participation. In addition, the context of this email was posted on social media outlets (e.g. Facebook, Returning Citizens Network of New York, Prison Action Network, and Linked in).

My recruitment efforts extended to several programs and events I attended during the span of this study (Padgett, 2008). As people responded, even though some did not meet the requirement for participation, I followed those encounters with a request that they identify others who potentially met the criteria outlined who they thought might be interested in participating. None of the people included as participants received services or support from my organization (Becker, 1986).

Eligibility. To be eligible for inclusion in this study, participants meet all of the following criteria:

- 1) At least 25 years of age at the time of the interview;
- 2) Self-identify as US-born African American;
- 3) Had spent at least 5 years in a New York state prison;

- 4) Had completed their sentences including time in community supervision related to probation or parole;
- 5) Had been in the community at least three years since their initial release;
- 6) Currently lived in the New York City area;
- 7) Had not received direct services from Citizens Against Recidivism, Inc., an organization with which I am associated,
- 8) Had not recidivated since being released.

For this study, recidivism includes any of several factors: post-prison arrest leading to a new conviction that may or may not result in a fine, probation or imprisonment, or the violation of conditions of release resulting in imprisonment (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014; Langan & Levin, 2002).

Data Collection Procedures.

Following screening for eligibility and developing a pool of participants who met the criteria, I provided more details about the study and offered a consent form to review to those selected for interviewing. After agreeing to participate, participants were asked to adopt pseudonyms so that any identifying information would be kept confidential. They were informed of my desire to audio record the interview and given the option to decline or decline the recording of specific sections of the interview. All recorded information and any other information linked to participants was secured in password protected electronic files and secured in lock locations to which I the principle investigator had access.

Collection of demographic data. I gathered personal data for this study using a demographic questionnaire. The questionnaire questions included those on current age, age at incarceration, age at release, length of time incarcerated, length of time since release from prison,

length of time in community supervision (on parole), length of time since completion of sentence, the type of crime they were convicted of related to their last incarceration, and religious affiliation. I asked participants to complete the demographic questionnaire at the end of the initial interview.

Collection of interview data: The process. In addition to the demographic questionnaire I used face-to-face interview for the collection of data. Study participants were interviewed at a convenient place and time of their choosing to insure privacy and confidentiality. The initial semi-structured interview of each participant took, on average, about 60 minutes (Padgett, 2008; White & White 1984).

The interview protocol. The questions posed during the interview relate to this study's main areas of interest: 1) definition of success post-release; 2) experiences pursuing success post-release as defined by participants; 3) how in-prison experiences either helped or hindered the achievement of success; and 4) how well-being is understood and the extent to which it has been achieved. The main topics and a brief description are included below. The full protocol is in Appendix D.

Introductory script. This study and interview is being conducted so that I might learn how formerly incarcerated people think about their post-prison experiences. It is particularly important for my research that those who have been in prison tell their point of view about their experiences, including how their prison experience might be relevant, if at all, to what they experienced after release. I have asked for your help because only you can provide that information.

A. **Success Post-Prison**

Main Question:

I am hoping to learn about what it means to achieve success after having spent a number of years in prison. Of course, success means different things to different people. So, from your point of view, what does it mean to be *successful* after prison?

B. Experiences in the Pursuit of Post-Release Success

Main Question:

I know it's been awhile since you have been home, tell me what you remember about those first couple of years?

- What was most frustrating?
- What were you most afraid of?
- What was easier or more rewarding than you expected?
- Can you describe what it was you were feeling emotionally during those early years?

C. The In-prison Experiences and The Achievement of Success

Tell me about prison as you remember it Describe for me what stands out for you when you were in prison, what experiences stand out even today.

Main Question:

How did being in prison help or prevent you from being successful today based on your definition of success? Alternative: what affect did your prison experience have on your efforts to be successful after your release?

Probes:

Describe for me how what was going on in prison might have helped you accomplish your goals or achieve success after release. (Probes below will only be used if interviewee raises these issues.)

1. Employment

2. Education
3. Relationships with own children, family
4. Friendship, Intimate Relationships
5. Health
6. Religion/Spirituality
7. Stuff going on in prison (this could include formal and informal programs, violence, solitary confinement, etc.)
8. Other

D. Understanding well-being

Main Question:

At this point in your life, after all you have been through, can you describe how you are feeling about your life, about yourself right now . . . today?

E. Post interview comments (Demographic questionnaire – See Appendix E).

Initial Data Analysis Strategy

Following completion of the in-person interviews, independent transcribers transcribed the recorded versions into an electronic format. During this research, I reviewed the quality of the audio device before sending the tapes to hired transcribers but no instructions were provided along with the tapes. Upon my review of the interview transcripts, a number of inaccuracies were discovered. I concluded that the transcribers were not overly familiar with Black vernacular or prison jargon. My concerns about transcript quality relate to rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research (Davidson, 2009) and required that I review the transcripts to ensure insure that what was to be relied upon as data were indeed a verbatim account of the interviews

(Poland, 1995). Following this verification process, I used **NVivo 11**, a text analysis tool, to organize, help manage, and store data configured into codes for analysis.

The first step in “defining what the data are about,” generally known as coding, is the phase when the researcher moves “beyond concrete statements in the data to making analytic interpretations” of it (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). Saldaña calls it “a process that permits data to be ‘segregated, grouped, regrouped, and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation’” (Saldaña, 2013, p 9).

Charmaz’s (2006) method emphasizes initial, focused, axial, and theoretical coding that progresses from one phase to the next, whereas Saldaña (2013) contends that coding schemes developed by scholars need not progress linearly. They may be recurring, moving from basic forms to more complex and advanced formats. This study began with a close reading of participants’ interview transcripts followed by an initial coding as described by Charmaz (2006) that included conceptualizing, naming, and assigning meaning to passages in the transcribed text as a way of getting closer to participants and as a way of learning about ideas important to them. During this phase, the aim was to “to remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by (a) readings of the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.46). In addition, I used the *In Vivo Coding* method as described by Saldaña (2013), using words and phrases in the text to give priority to participants’ voice when possible.

Charmaz (2006) warns that axial coding, although intended to identify meaningful theoretical relationships among the coding categories, can make data analysis burdensome and may be avoided if leads defined from other material are evident. Thus, the second phase of my analysis included the identification of recurring themes and converting them to codes with concise definitions. This review of the data and my initial codes guided to the categorization

under main headings and subcategories the codes from the first phase of data analysis. This was not a linear process (Saldaña, 2013), but followed returning to previous levels to review assumptions and linkages made before deciding upon the results shown below.

Credibility (authenticity) and trustworthiness. Standards of rigor for the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research differ from those of quantitative research (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Krefting, 1991; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004). A qualitative approach includes sitting with the data for extended periods, evaluating the researcher's constructions and coding, reflecting upon interview sessions, and implementing strategies to minimize researcher bias, including member checks (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011).

Member checking, peer, and mentor examination. For this study, I consulted a small group of formerly incarcerated men I work with at Citizens Against Recidivism, Inc. I presented to them the codes I developed during my analysis of the data for examination and asked them about their meanings to assess the merit of my representations. This procedure was consistent with the work of Barusch and colleagues (2011) who asked respondents "to review transcripts of their interviews or to comment on results of the study" (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011, p. 16). I also checked with formerly incarcerated individuals who had not been interviewed to see if the conclusions drawn came close to their experiences and understanding. I conducted this checking in casual one-on-one conversations. I briefed the men about the nature of the study during individual meetings and about what I sought to learn. I reviewed with them my coding scheme and the meanings I assigned to a number of codes. In addition to the men talking about their experiences and talking about what they thought success was after prison, they indicated that the codes I used resonated with their understanding.

Peer and mentor examinations have the same intent as member checking. I discussed my findings with peers familiar with qualitative research techniques. I asked them to confirm codes and categories developed from my interpretations of the data. In their estimations, the codes and the meanings I assigned to them were clear. I also asked peers to examine portions of interviewee transcripts and to code them using the codes I developed to test the consistency of my coding schemes. I found substantial agreement between our coding of the transcripts.

Ethical Issues

Institutional Review Board. In all phases of the qualitative research process, there are concerns about ethical issues including those related to the participants, places where interviews take place, data collection, funders, publishers, and other stakeholders (Creswell, 2012; Marshall, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2012) reminds us that institutional review board approval about data collection strategies and related work with human participants must be forthcoming from a university or college before one enters the field. The principle role of an institutional review board is to protect the rights and welfare of research participants, to monitor the integrity of proposed research, and to minimize any potential conflicts of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; West Los Angeles, Ruelaz, Miake-Lye, Beroes, & Newberry, 2012).

For the pilot study used to inform my proposal, and for the actual study, I sought and obtained IRB approval before interviewing my research participants. The approved protocols ensured that participation in the research was voluntary, that participants knew that the research was related to the dissertation for my doctorate degree, and I intended to use the results of the research in future publishable documents. Verbal and written consent was sought and obtained from my research participants to record the interviews.

Confidentiality. My interviews were conducted in secure and safe environments (in business offices, places of worship, at participants' homes and in the conference area of my own office) agreed upon by my participants to facilitate their comfort and confidentiality.

Minimizing harm. I advised participants that there was a risk of having their identities inadvertently exposed. They were told of the possibility that their history of incarceration might be revealed inadvertently by being associated with the researcher who did work in the areas where interviews were being conducted. I warned them that minor details of their personal life presented as part of quotes in the documents that are made public from this study might inadvertently reveal their identity. I also advised the men that they would experience no physical discomfort during the interviews. To minimize these risks I informed participants that all audio recording and other records of their identities would be kept confidential and stored at my offices in a secure place that only I have access. There would be no recordings or transcripts or other records of recording that would include their real name. I also provided my participants with a list of service providers including counselors available in case they had negative feelings about their experiences if any emerged during or after the interview for which they might need help.

Conflict of interest. The study presented no conflict of interest with my position as executive director of Citizens Against Recidivism. Those who have received services from our organization were not eligible for participation in the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the post-release experiences of Black men who have remained outside of prison for three or more years. The primary research question informing this study was: How do Black men define *success* after prison? I asked additional research questions so that the men might expand on or provide additional clarity about their definitions of success: What post-prison experiences do Black men have pursuing *success* as they defined it? and How did the in-prison experiences of Black men shape their pursuit of *success* post-release? Some final, exploratory questions derived from literature on mental health related to how well-being is understood and the degree to which it had been achieved post-release. I have based the findings in this chapter on an analysis of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the study participants.

Study Participants

All 17 participants in this study self-identified as African American men who met the eligibility requirements for participation in this study as described in Chapter 3. When interviewed, their ages ranged between 33 and 79, averaging 53.9 years (See Table 1). At the start of their incarceration, ages ranged between 16 and 42, or an average of 22.3 years. Their average age at release was 39.5, and ranged between 28 and 67 year. Table 1 shows the average number of years participants spent in prison (16.6 years), time spent on parole (4.1 years), the length of time following released from prison including time spent on community supervision (15.2), and the average number of years since completion of their sentences (11.3). Incarceration for the majority of the men (77%) followed a conviction for a violent crime.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Demographic Characteristics	N = 17
Current Age	
Range	33 to 79 years
Mean	53.94
Median	55
Age at Incarceration	
Range	16 to 42 years
Mean	22.82
Median	21
Age at Release	
Range	28 to 74 years
Mean	39.47
Median	37
Length of Time Incarcerated	
Range	5 to 32
Mean	16.65
Median	15.00
Length of Time on Parole (, i.e. Supervision)	
Range	1 to 20 years
Mean	4.12
Median	3
Length of Time Since Release From Prison (Including Supervision)	
Range	4 to 33 years
Mean	15.41
Median	13
Length of Time Since Completion of Sentence (Post-Supervision)	
Range	1 to 30 years
Mean	11.29
Median	8
Type of Crime	
Drug	4 (23%)
Violent	13 (77%)

Table 2 below includes additional information about each participant. A code was constructed as a pseudonym for each participant interviewed. I decided on three critical variables to use in describing each man's prison experience based on my review of the literature. In particular, the literature on normative human development, the impact of prolonged incarceration, and the years of life experience since release. Participants' names are followed by

the first variable, which is age at most recent incarceration, the second, duration of incarceration, and the third, elapsed time since release. I created pseudonyms for each participant. For example, if a participant was incarcerated at 22 years old and was in prison for 9 years before release, and I interviewed him five years afterward, his release from prison pseudonym would be fictitious Name(22[9]5).

Table 2

Age at Incarceration, Time Incarcerated and Assigned Name

Age Incarcerated	Time Incarcerated	Assigned Name
< 21	< 10	HARRY(16[19]13)
		JAMES(17[15]33)
		KEITH(17[15]29)
	≥ 10	DAVE(18[19]12)
		GEORGE(18[31]7)
		REGGIE(18[20]5)
21 – 29	< 10	OSCAR(18[10]11)
		FRANK(28[5]30)
	≥ 10	CHARLES(21[8]5)
		ULYSSES(21[15]24)
		ARRON(21[27]7)
		ARTIE(21[17]16)
30+	< 10	DONALD(22[10]24)
		JALIL(23[15]17)
	≥ 10	SAM(37[5]15)
		CHUCK(30[20]10)
		LEON(42[32]5)

Findings

The analysis included two coding strategies. For some themes, *in vivo* coding was used and in other instances, I constructed codes based on terminology related to constructs in the literature. Coding categories were not mutually exclusive. I used only one reference in instances where a participants' single response received more than one code.

Six themes, including several developed prior to any analysis, were central to the coding scheme: 1) attaining a satisfying “quality of life” and or acquiring basic needs, 2) family reintegration and family support, 3) other relationships and support, 4) community reintegration and community activity, 5) self-concept, and 6) coping. These themes relate to material, social or psychological conceptions of success. Table 3 below contains a summary of the themes, categories, and codes related to the responses men gave to the primary research question: What does it mean to be successful after prison?

Attaining a Satisfying Quality of Life

This section contains a description of the tangible and intangible assets the men associated with post-prison success, as distinct from human supports and psychological factors.

Remaining free. According to the majority of participants, “success was in different degrees.” It had “a couple of different parts” and was subject to change because of the changing situations a person released from prison encountered. Nonetheless, former incarcerates also defined success – at least initially - as not recidivating. For example, a number of men said that success was “not going back to prison,” or “staying out.”

Quality of life. After being out of prison for an unspecified amount of time, Dave(18[19]12) noted that “it’s not just me being [back in the community], but it’s the quality of life that I live while I’m here” that defines success. Success defined as quality of life had several meanings. For example, during an exchange I had with James(17[15]33), he explained the link between staying out of prison and quality of life he attained this way:

Table 3
Summary of Codes

Meaning of Success	Themes related to the meaning of success	Code Frequencies
<p>Fitting In (23)</p> <p>As if never having been in prison</p>	<p>Attaining a satisfying quality of life/acquiring basic needs</p>	<p>Remaining free (15)</p> <p>Quality of life (9)</p> <p>Tangible symbols of success (8)</p> <p>Housing (6)</p> <p>Education (6)</p> <p>Employment (22)</p>
	<p>Family Reintegration and Family Support</p>	<p>Family reintegration (16)</p> <p>Building family (7)</p> <p>Establishing an Intimate Relationships (9)</p> <p>Family support (7)</p>
	<p>Other Relationships and Support</p>	<p>Relationships (7)</p> <p>Friendships (8)</p> <p>Social supports (18)</p>
	<p>Community Reintegration and Community Activity</p>	<p>Community reintegration (2)</p> <p>Civic/community activity (2)</p> <p>Serving the in-prison community (5)</p>
	<p>Self-Concept</p>	<p>Self-worth (9)</p> <p>Sense of humanity (6)</p> <p>Dealing with stigma (30)</p> <p>Redefining self (23)</p> <p>Personal autonomy (15)</p>
	<p>Coping</p>	<p>Spirituality (34)</p> <p>Maintaining mental health (5)</p> <p>Remaining Drug free (3)</p> <p>Ability to coping (11)</p>

Note: The code frequencies are the number of times I coded a theme during analysis of the interview data. The frequencies do not reflect the number of individuals making mention of the idea

Interviewer: So from your point of view what does it mean to be successful after prison?

Interviewee: Staying out.

Interviewer: Staying out. Just staying out of prison. So, if you had a kind of a list of things that you might include...

Interviewee: I mean with some qualifying variables. I don't mean staying out being homeless . . . and stuff like that, but I think staying out and then having a particular quality of life. . . . You know a quality of life defined by the individual, but it should, I would think that it would include employment, it would include family, a dollar in your pocket, you know, all relative, but a quality in life that's consistent with the hopes and aspirations of the individual.

Tangible symbols of success. These ideas point to a definition of success symbolized by home ownership, a high paying job, and an expensive car sometimes characterized as the “American dream.” Leon(42[32]5) defined it this way.

Sometimes success is the American dream . . . You know, you come out of school, you got the degree, business suit and all this blah blah this blah blah that. . . It means having a steady job where you have a steady income where you have enough money coming in where you can take care of your responsibilities to yourself, to your family, and to your neighborhood. These, these, these are the things that I count for success and that you get from the American dream.

Arron(21[27]7) further explained, “The success part really comes in when you be in a place in your life where you can have all these things. You have food, clothing, shelter, [and] be employed.” Participants frequently described their perception of success in material and social-status terms, likening the acquisition of material things to a seal of approval and a symbol of advancement from the status of deprived and prisoner. These ideas anticipate the move from success as simply staying out of prison to a view of a “good life” as success or, at least, integral to it.

Housing. Housing is clearly a tangible indicator of success. The men also see employment (discussed below) and shelter as material essentials needed after prison. Moreover, these items contribute to a sense of autonomy. For Keith(17[15]29) having these items meant “. . . being independent by finding . . . work and [your] own place to live.” When describing their

concerns about housing the men often accompanied these with metaphors for anxiety and instability. For instance, Artie(21[17]16) likened the period following his release to an amusement park ride: “it’s been like a rollercoaster. It’s been a rollercoaster ride and initially coming out and being able to obtain employment, having support, that’s a major stability and what I mean when I say support, some type of stability, particularly housing.” Although some participants previously lived in supportive housing or lived with a relative when released from prison, none of the men mentioned either of these as a symbol of success.

De-emphasizing the tangible. Despite making mention of tangible trappings when pointing to symbols of success, some participants saw other things as more important. For example, Reggie(18[20]5) said, “The car is irrelevant; that’s minor, that’s like material gain Riches can’t promote life, life promotes riches, and so I don’t value that.” Sam(37[5]15) made the same observation when saying that success “is more [than the job, the house]. It just wasn’t the job and the housing. It was a mindset for me.” Most participants returned from prison with some form of material support, and only one did not return to live with a family member. However, those who left prison without family support or housing were required to secure agency-sponsored housing as a condition for their release. It should be noted that participants made their remarks in retrospect while being in possession of some of these symbols. De-emphasizing these tangible things or not mentioning them as the most important element of their success may suggest that these items may be taken for granted the longer men remain out of prison.

Education. Some participants related having an education when released to their ability to achieve the good life. James(17[15]33) made the point that “education has played a key role” during his post-prison journey. Echoing this sentiment, Arron(21[27]7) said

Education has been one of the most important things for me to be able to . . . get through whatever I am confronted with in life and on my road to success. So education is really the most important thing for me. It's been that guiding light for me.

James(17[15]33), Arron(21[27]7), and others made a point of saying education is what makes hope for the good life possible. While touting the benefits of an education, some participants seemed to believe that the larger society did not give people returning from prison a pass just because they acquired one. Jalil(23[15]17) inferred as much when he let on that “one of the problems with the ex-offender who comes home with an education is that he comes home hoping, believing that he or she can be a full participant of the American Dream based upon the education.” Besides an education, participants tended to need additional resources given the documented barriers to post-release success.

Employment. In addition to the tangible factors associated with a definition of success as described by my research participants, for some, having a job was the first line of defense that prevented them from committing a crime. Ulysses(21[15]24) specifically said, “If I don't have a job, I'm going to go back and commit a crime.” Participants like Sam(37[5]15) felt having a job “kept [him] out of harm's way [and that] . . . even being a waiter” served that purpose. However, according to Ulysses(21[15]24), not just any job would serve this purpose. “Success, of course, is to maintain stable employment. To maintain it, I mean and I don't mean just menial employment. I mean to maintain employment to where you can provide for the family. You know, that's success.” No matter the type of employment, earning sufficient income was essential to their feeling of success; that is, employment led to the tangibles they associated with success.

Generally, the men emphasized the importance of employment during what some described as a critical period, the first three months, following release. Arron(21[27]7) expressed as much when describing his experience after being released saying that:

Everything was new, you know, everything was fresh as like, you know, just like being born again and having to go through the steps to learn how do I fit in. How do I make it? How do I succeed? How do I be successful? How do I not go back to prison? And so for me, one of the most important things for me was to be able to get employment. I felt that employment will put me in a position where I can be able to sustain housing, I can be able to feed myself, I can be able to have clothes and that was like a new to me, it was starting all over.

Family Reintegration and Family Support

I describe reuniting with family members and family support in this section as social components of post-prison success.

Family reintegration. Participants linked family reintegration with their perceptions of *social* success. They described family integration as reuniting with their family of origin. For example, Keith(17[15]29) realized that his family had a negative opinion of him at release based on behaviors that preceded his incarceration. He mentioned that he went to prison when he was 17 years old. He said his family members had “heard stories about how [he] used to do this, used to do that, used to rob and go out and steal cars,” which he admitted doing. Nevertheless, after being incarcerated he wanted his family and others to understand that he was not that same person. That understanding “became very important . . . to trying to reestablish those connections and letting people know that . . . [he wanted] to help,” to be a part of the family. For him, “Success . . . meant reuniting with that family after 15 years” of incarceration. Similarly, Ulysses(21[15]24) was equally clear: “Success means to reintegrate into your family, you know, because you've been removed from the family . . . so for me . . . it's to reintegrate into my biological family.”

Building family. For some men, reuniting with the family also meant starting a new family. Ulysses(21[15]24) expressed as much when he said success meant to “start a family, if incarceration put a divide between the family I had before I went to prison.” Imprisoned at the age of 17, this idea resonated with Harry(16[19]13). He thought “being successful after prison was . . . establishing a family life . . . outside of a prison. . . [by having an] intimate relationship with somebody, and also . . . having children.” Like him, half of the men interviewed had not reached the age of 21 when first incarcerated.

Intimate relationships. Here, an intimate relationship is defined as emotional (if not sexual) intimacy. It is important to note that none of the participants characterized their relationships with other men in intimate or sexual terms, nor did any identify themselves as gay. Having gone to prison as teens and very young adults, a good number of the men had limited experiences with adult romantic relationships. During my talks with them, the idea of establishing an intimate relationship with a woman after release emerged in connection with success.

Keith(17[15]29) declared

There’s been a time since I’ve been out where I’ve gone through some relational difficulties with the women and kind of had a setback. It’s because it’s difficult trying to relate, you’re trying to be the man, you’re trying to do everything appropriate but I was 17 when I went away. . . . And what I knew about developing relationships was not a lot. So I’m trying to develop a relationship with a woman who doesn’t have that gap of her life missing, so it became a difficult thing. And in the first relationship it just didn’t work out.

Keith(17[15]29) subsequently remarried. At the time of the interview, he had been married for 12 years since being divorced. He attributed the mistakes made in his first marriage to not knowing how to handle a relationship. He said that his current wife was the beneficiary of his past mistakes and part of the family support from which he now benefited.

Family support. Some participants reported living with family members during the initial period following their release. Receiving help or assistance from family members is among the supports some said they needed to begin successful transitions. As previously mentioned, “social” was distinguished from the material benefits associated with family support. The men regarded their social support from family members as an integral aspect of their success. For example, George(18[31]7) said that, “The most important support you know [is] family.” Other men, like Reggie(18[20]5), had family members who “showed [him] how to like go shopping, get clothes . . . fill out applications” but were otherwise encouraging if they made mistakes when trying to do things on their own. Even after being out of prison for more than two decades, some men still counted family support among the key factors contributing to their achievements. Ulysses(21[15]24) noted “if I don't have family support, a positive support network, I'm going to gravitate to a negative one.” Similarly, when recalling the things that attributed to his accomplishments, James(17[15]33) said, “I had three things working for me. One, I had a job; two, I had family support; three, I had at least a high school diploma.” In addition to family relationships and family support, participants linked other personal associations, including friendships with their post-prison achievements.

Other Relationships and Support

In connection with success, participants did not describe their post-prison relationships as sexual ones with women or men. This section contains descriptions of other relationships, including friendships, social networks and help from social agencies as additional social factors related to post-prison success.

Relationships. The men thought of their non-sexual relationships as highly meaningful. James(17[15]33) said as much when asked about this noting how “relationships play a key role; I

am not talking about male-female [sexual] relationship. I am talking about support relationships.” Adding to the point, Charles(21[8]5) said

I’m really talking about . . . relationships . . . that are meaningful and they are about love, trust, care, and accountability; about making sure that we’re accountable, respect each other to whatever agreements, whatever norms that we decide that we want to set with each other. . . . And a lot of times that means . . . folks that I want to organize . . . its people that [I] share lots of time [with] . . . not like my traditional family.

In this regard, associates who were women were important to George(18[31]7) because he felt “women [can] tell us things we [men] don’t see; tell us you shouldn’t do this, you should not do that, be careful with this, be careful with that.”

Friendships. The men described having confidants, personal and professional associates as friendships integral to their post-prison success. Describing the interactions he found helpful since his release from prison, Ulysses(21[15]24) pointed to his “maintaining a healthy relationship with change agents,” that is, professional networks as key to his post-prison success. He said of them that they help him and others become better human beings. Although similar to the social support described below, George(18[31]7) said that a friend was “someone who will sit you down and tell you when things aren’t going good for you, when they think you are making a mistake.” He went on to described these as “priceless” particularly “when [he got] stressed out” and needed “their insights” on how to handle difficult situations. These type relationships also included connections with people likely to be mentors. For example, Arron(21[27]7) believed he was no longer the 21-year-old man he was when entering prison. Now that he was older, more mature and had endured the prison experience, he wanted to be connected with “professional people who [would be] able to give [him] insight to help [him] be successful and maintain that success.” He thought that “a big part of [his] being able to be

successful [was his being able] to know people, to be able to interact with people, professional people, not people on the street.”

In sum, participants’ comments seem to suggest that friendships and relationships as described were the type peer interactions they thought were needed for, and related to their post-prison success.

Social supports. The men found social supports equally important to success. Social supports were considered help from supportive social networks and social services.

Receipt of social services. Some men found receipt of social services relevant to their success, especially during the first three months following release. Receipt of services meant material help from social service agencies. Talking about the first few months following his release, Artie(21[17]16) stated, “I [was] finding out where the supports [were] and kind of linking up with different agencies and organizations in order to kind of stay afloat.” For some, these services are essential. For example, Leon(42[32]5) went to prison in his forties and spent more than three decades incarcerated. As a senior citizen, he found few opportunities for employment. Although it had been at least five years since his incarceration, the social services supports he received were the bulk of, if not all of his material aide. For him, “SSI helped improve things. I get \$800 [a month]. And \$180 in food stamps. That holds me doing a month.” Leon(42[32]5) managed these supports by calling on experiences he had while incarcerated, realizing he “had to . . . understand, [he had] to live out here like [he lived] in the jail.”

In-prison relationships. For some men the positive support networks included men they spent time with in prison who were released some time before them that they considered successful. George(18[31]7) was emphatic when he said:

I think the number one thing that helped me be successful [was] a support group; mainly the type of individuals that have been out here prior to my release from incarceration. I speak to them. I talked to them. I ask them how did they do it. And they basically told me the same thing: find someone who didn't go back to prison, someone who's not out there talking about let's go sell some drugs and let's take this guy up, but someone who has settled down and is willing to live a real life, not in a fantasy world.

Ulysses(21[15]24) provided additional insights about having this kind of support network. While agreeing about the significance of a positive support network, he made clear it was important “because even your family, while they are your family, they're not going to understand you like somebody who's been formally incarcerated.”

In summary, these supports were considered integral to the process of remaining free, which men did define as success.

Community Reintegration and Engagement

This section contains a description of the importance participants attach to rejoining with and participating in community life as aspects of social success distinct from the material and psychological features of their post-prison success.

Community reintegration. Although the men deemed reuniting with their families and friends as social success, community reintegration was also an integral part of their social success. The men described community reintegration as rejoining with and participating in the communities where they lived. On this point, Charles(21[8]5) observed:

I think when we talk about success . . . often time we don't talk about the people and the communities that we're accountable to. And I think right there you have built in those kind of foundation relationships . . . [that] extend . . . to family who are not [related by] blood . . . [that] I am accountable to . . . [that] give me different kind of senses like selflessness and a different kind of responsibility. . . ”

Ulysses(21[15]24) agreed that the ability to reintegrate in the community was success. He mentioned as much when saying “Everything I think starts from my community life . . .

maintaining my community life.” He further remarked “. . . success, for me, is to reintegrate, back into the community, in an overall community.”

Civic or community activity. Community reintegration included becoming an active member of the community and its activities. It is likely that when men reflected on the crime or crimes they committed that lead to their incarceration, they thought of the harm that they had done to the community. Thus, giving back to, or engaging in community life in a positive way became an important goal for many of the men. For example, Ulysses(21[15]24) said, “for the formerly incarcerated . . . success is giving back. And not just getting a house in the country. Picket white fence, two car garage, two . . . children.” Adding to his comments, he said success for formerly incarcerated people is “giving back to the overall community that you came from,” that is, success is to “participate in the growth and the development of the positive things in the neighborhood.”

Serving the in-prison community. On the most part, being involved with the community meant the community outside of prison. However, for some formerly incarcerated people community activity also included serving the in-prison community. These men would describe this form of giving back as being able to serve, aid, or interact with people in prison once released. Leon(42[32]5), who was in his seventies at the time of the interview and had spent more than three decades in prison, said that he “made a commitment to the brothers” to come back and “bring back people” who would be able to run programs he started during his imprisonment. Now that he has been released from prison, Leon(42[32]5) “gets back inside, [tries] to help [the] guys, , especially the long-termers. . . That's what my life is now.”

At the time of the interview, Leon(42[32]5) had been out of prison for seven years and had completed his sentence more than four years ago. Describing what he has been doing for the last 18 months, he said

I haven't been getting paid or nothing, but it's work. It's getting me back in there . . . the stuff I want to do. For me, that's success. You know, I'm finally getting able to go back inside. . . So for me, that's what success is. It's not the money. You know, and all that, the job and all that. It's the idea that you make that commitment and you carry it through.

Ulysses(21[15]24) expressed a similar sentiment when saying:

Success for me is to be able to give back . . . to try to help somebody . . . who is less fortunate. I visit various prisons throughout the year to encourage brothers and sisters who are incarcerated . . . [that] there is a life after incarceration.

It may be that being able to help this way helps the men doing so, feel good about themselves.

Self-Concept

This section consists of psychological features of post-prison success, as distinct from the material and social factors mentioned above. Elements of self-concept, that is, how participants perceived themselves, was based on their interactions with others and linked to self-worth, stigma, and on how the men redefined themselves.

Self-worth. The men also related their definitions of success to how they valued themselves based on perceptions of their capacity to do or achieve things after prison. Participants' self-worth was associated with their psychological success. Leon(42[32]5) described self-worth as "that internal thing inside of you." He said it was "a certain recognition you give to yourself, a certain satisfaction that you have in yourself." After describing these feelings, Leon(42[32]5) said,

Let's you say, I'm on the right track . . . [and] helps you feel well about yourself. . . . And it makes you feel ... It gives you a sense of accomplishment, a sense of achievement . . . [and say to yourself] 'I'm achieving things.'

Self-reflection. Notions of self-concept for these participants suggest that they are reflecting on their psychological or internal selves. I have described some of their references as character issues because their comments tend to reflect a change in their thinking, morality, or attitudes about themselves and their past being incarcerated. Reflecting on his experience Sam(37[5]15) said

It's not verbal, or much of a physical [thing]. It's more . . . mental or psychological, like you really have it get into you You really need to humble yourself Like you have to take those steps back in order to see things I really had to humble myself. I got sick and tired of going through that process [of going to prison], being up there and dealing with the nonsense and it was a lot. . . . Like you look and you just feel with your body when going to jail, "like listen this is not the right thing dude. No more getting out in the street. It is not the right thing." You have to really feel it . . . You got to feel it mentally, psychologically. You got to just feel it all through your bones like, this is not for me. I don't want to go through that process no more. That's what worked for me.

Sense of humanity. A recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst the men that their feeling good about themselves as human beings after the prison experience was an accomplishment. According to Ulysses(21[15]24), the prison treated those housed as non-persons. He observed that "prison robs you . . . it makes you a number." When he talked about his experience, he recalled: "We experienced the [prison] environment that wants to beat you down as a human being, as opposed to trying to lift you up." Consequently, after prison "You have to affirm who you are" as a human being. Alternately, as George(18[31]7) put it, it is important to "see yourself [in a positive way] so you can relate with others on a more humane plain." According to Ulysses(21[15]24), any level of post-prison achievement "affirms you as the person that you know you are and [are] supposed to be." The comments made by a number of the men suggest that from a psychological perspective success is feeling like a human being or regaining a sense of one's humanity. Self-affirmation after having been in prison may also relate to efforts to deal with stigma associated with incarceration.

Dealing with stigma. The quotes above show how the men linked notions of success with self-concept, self-worth, and their sense of humanity. These views also surfaced in relation to how they responded to the incarceration credential. Men first realize the significance of the credential as an ex-inmate, ex-convict, or formerly incarcerated person when initially released from prison. Some men seemed unprepared for or uncertain of how being formally incarcerated would be received by others. This uncertainty can lead to intense anxiety. Recalling the days following his release, Leon(42[32]5) said,

I remember I used to ride the subways. I would ride [and] I would be soaking wet with sweat. I used to hold on to the bar. I'd be scared to look up because you'd be afraid people looking at you that they know. You know what I mean?

When released Reggie(18[20]5) said, he felt “fear a little bit because I felt that I had a mark on me. I felt like I was sticking out.” Donald(22[10]24) also said he was “always fearful of the unknown, [of] the tactics of the powers that be; what they are able to do at any given moment just because a person has a prior conviction.” Going further, Donald(22[10]24) called the credential

. . . a stain because that's what it is. It's a permanent stain on your clothes; this is a stain that you can't change. You can't wash out. You can't bleach out. This is just that stain that's in everybody's database . . . And the truth is that I live in a society that no matter what I do, you know, if I did a thousand things correctly and helped a million people . . . guess what, do you remember he did that.

Keith(17[15]29) acknowledged being distressed over a similar experience and feeling.

I could be home 25,000 years, 1971 is never going to go away. As soon as people find out that you've been incarcerated it's like it happened yesterday; that's how they treat you. If you go for an interview for a job, and I'm very honest, if I wanted a secondary job, a couple of times I've done it, I'll put that down and I don't think so. I still get that and it's been 25 years, 40 years now and I still get it. You'll still get that because that happened so many years ago that you were arrested but I have kind of gotten over the rejection piece.

It was difficult to blend in after release from prison. For example, Leon(42[32]5) said “sometimes [he] would go to places and [he would] sneak out” after being there for a while; he “would feel that emptiness, . . . [that he didn’t] fit in and . . . would just cut out.” Leaving a social setting was not the only strategy used to deal with the stigma of incarceration. Frank(28[5]30) thought he had “done a good job at reconstructing [his] narratives” to counter an assumed image society had of a formerly incarcerated person. He presumed that the societal image of an ex-prisoner and ex-con would be associated with him and that the image would adversely affect his efforts to get on with his life. People he encountered need only discover the credential of incarceration and it was as if nothing else he had accomplished mattered. However, it seems that the act of reconstructing one’s narrative positioned people like Frank(28[5]30) to be able to walk “down the hall . . . and see a white woman professional walk by and she says, ‘Hey how you doing?’ . . . It’s uh, boom, that’s it. She’s like, oh yeah, no he does this and that . . . That’s all I want them to know” because nothing else matters.

In spite of feeling that nothing should matter when presenting who they were at present, the men were acutely aware of societal images and stigma associated with formerly incarcerated people. They sought to devise varying strategies to deal with the stigma and to overcome or move beyond the assigned label. Rather than being totally incapacitated by their perceptions of the credential, most men found a way to resist being stuck in that view. For Artie(21[17]16), hope was a form of resistance. He also felt that he stood out and attributed the feelings he had to “part of the trauma of being incarcerated. You think that you stand out, but you really blend in; you blend in to the best of your ability.”

For the men, resistance often included not openly talking about the incarceration experience when there was no need. Perhaps they felt that they had to be the first to put the

experience behind them and out of sight. Arron(21[27]7) illustrates this point clearly when saying

If I don't tell nobody that I ever went to prison, they would never know. They would just be like "Yo listen, you know, you are a very intelligent person. You have a lot to offer. You are doing a good job. You are helping people." They would never know. . . . If I share that experience with them it will be like, it's just unbelievable for some people.

As Frank(28[5]30) contends, "success has a lot to do with . . . the presentation, the polish . . .

You know, being accepted by people who, uh, normally wouldn't accept you." The men thought that being accepted based on how a person presented himself or, as the person one presented himself to be, was achieving a psychological form of success.

Redefining self. Related to changes in self-concept, is the effort some men engaged in to redefine themselves as they attempted to start all over again. Efforts to redefine themselves or to establish themselves anew were part of their attempt to emerge from, overcome, or move beyond the stigma associated with being labeled ex-convict, ex-inmate, and even a formerly incarcerated person. Efforts to redefine themselves are included in the act of dis-identifying with a prisoner identity and associated behaviors that often accompany persons released from prison. Once released from prison, formerly incarcerated people are likely to feel little difference in their change in status from being an inmate to being an "ex" as they reenter society. Thus, the post-release actions of the men also included the psychological rejection of the negative labels, negative behaviors associated with those labels, and work to redefine the self.

Frank(28[5]30) redefined himself by first "becoming invisible [and] putting forward this different persona of who" he was after being incarcerated. During my conversations with Frank(28[5]30), he referenced *The Count of Monte Cristo*, a novel written by Alexandre Dumas in the 19th century to exemplify his situation. A major portion of *The Count of Monte Cristo* is about the life of a man after his prison experience. It had a major influence on my own

development as I saw it as an example of how a person might be transformed in prison despite its adverse conditions. During his incarceration, the Count, as I, was mentored by a “learned” man who schooled him on the ways of the world and how to succeed in it despite his past.

Frank(28[5]30) likened his experience to that of the Count when he said, “You know, I’m the Count of Monte Cristo.” The Count was a man who had gotten out of

prison and . . . reinvents himself so well that the people that knew him in the past didn't even know who we was This is a story about a formally incarcerated guy The old Edmund Dante [the name of the main character when he entered prison] is invisible to people [when he returned to the community].

Those who Edmund Dante encountered after prison only saw him as the Count of Monte Crisco even though many knew him as Dante. While this may sound extreme, by likening himself to the Count, Frank(28[5]30) saw a model he could follow that gave him a sense of confidence about being able to redefine himself. He also believed that this kind of thinking was a sign that he had no psychological desire to engage in criminal or deviant behavior. During my talk with him he said that the story provided “indications that, okay I think I'm going to make it. . . . I know I'm not going to rob nobody.”

Similarly, although sounding a bit frustrated during his effort to show those near him that he was not the same person, Reggie(18[20]5) exclaimed, “I know who I am as a person, but I wanted them to see it so bad. I wanted to show everybody that I’ve changed. I’ve changed. I’ve changed. Look at me, I am a new man.” In an account of his after prison experience, James(17[15]33) told how securing a position as “a Salvation Army officer . . . [was] a definite factor into my success. [I]t took me completely out of the world of being an ex-offender.” For him, his employment facilitated his ability to redefine himself. It was clear to him that “once I became a Salvation Army officer out of New York State, I was lieutenant” and not an “ex.” In every aspect of his career, “there . . . [was] no reference to who [he] was behind the wall;” there

was no need for one. Taken together, these few examples provide important insights into struggles the men engaged in to redefine themselves after prison. Overall, these results show that being able to achieve a new status is a psychological accomplishment. As such, psychological success enabled the men to be seen and to see themselves as a part of the communities to which they were returning, rather than on the outside of it. Consequently, their being perceived as members of the community enabled the men to feel free to move about just like any other member of the community.

Personal autonomy. Prisoners lack the liberty to act without restraint during the incarceration period; they must seek permission for what they want to do or are told what to do. Sam(37[5]15) described it as a place where you get “three [hots and a] . . . cot and somebody telling [you] when to move, when to go to bed, when to wake up.” As explained earlier, the prison experience attempts to emasculate men and reduce them to a childlike state. Upon release, men seek to decide for themselves and pursue objectives they choose for themselves as adults. In this sense, efforts to achieve personal autonomy are closely linked to success .

Dave(18[19]12) inferred as much when saying

The biggest thing I had a problem [with coming home after prison] was reporting at parole, because as far as I was concerned I did my time. . . . I earned the right to be back here, so I felt like I don’t need nobody trying to monitor me like a little child. . . . So that was probably more frustrating than anything else.

The inability to deal with frustration as described makes the transition difficult for some although the desire for personal autonomy remains even as the men comply with institutional demands.

The desire for personal autonomy was also evident in comments made by other men interviewed. For example, Jalil(23[15]17) wanted “the freedom of getting up and looking at a horse or going to put your foot in some water, going for a swim; the freedom to interact with nature.” Similarly, George(18[31]7) said, “A real life for me is being able to get up in the

morning, get in my car, get on my motorcycle, [and] see people that I really care about.” As strange as it may seem, the men are describing normal life experiences fueled by values touted in mainstream, particularly for people who have not been incarcerated. However, the suspension of normal life experiences are integral to State sanctioned deprivations. To reacquire personal liberties is an achievement or form of post-prison success. Jalil(23[15]17) was clear about this when saying

Success to me is best identified as having the ability to travel, to drive, to cook what I want, to dress as I please, to engage in any activity that I find pleasurable, to run, to dive, to vacation, to scuba dive to be specific, to become part of the National Geographic experience, to study, and to pursue whatever objective I feel like I want to pursue.

In summary, for the men in this study the ideas expressed about how they saw themselves after prison representative of success included having personal autonomy, feeling valued, feeling human, overcoming stigma associated with the incarceration credential, and their being received by peers and others as they presented themselves anew; all these relate to psychological achievements.

Coping

The coping literature has a long history in psychology, Lazarus (1991) being one of its major scholars early on. Coping relates to efforts to consciously engage in some activity to mitigate a burdensome or stressful situation. This section describes some of these activities including thinking about spirituality, health, and coping skills employed.

Spirituality. Spirituality was mentioned by 12 of the 17 men interviewed in relation to their post-prison success. Based on ideas expressed by them, I defined spirituality inductively as any expression, connection with, or being influenced by a higher power or doctrine; any adherence to or practice of religious teachings. For example, Arron(21[27]7) pointed out that having

. . . spiritual contact is very important; to have some type of spirituality, to have some type of belief system to believe and to believe that there is a higher power. . . . And so when it comes to believing in something, a higher power or having other spiritual people around that can give you insight into things that can help you, is very important. That has helped me out a lot . . . things like that has helped me to stay focused and to maintain all that I accomplished, but also to be able to go through all the encounters that you go through too because there is a lot that you are going through, it's not an easy task, it's going to be very, very difficult, there's going to be a lot of barriers. All of those things have to come together for the success to be success, successful and to maintain it.

Adding to what has been explained, Harry(16[19]13) described “spirituality [as] . . . the foundation . . . then, of course, after that is trying to put it into application--you know--in a meaningful way.” Other men suggested that it was important to prioritize their relationship with a supreme being, no matter the name, as a way of anchoring themselves in an attempt to withstand pulls toward negative behavior. Artie(21[17]16) related his sense of spirituality to his ability to cope while in prison and to achieving his post-prison success.

I'm a person that I got a little bit of spirituality and I think that, that regimen or spirituality really was the major factor that helped me through [the prison experience] because that's something that I'm still holding on to today. . . . So I believe that particular part of the experience in prison really helped me a whole lot. . . . And if it wasn't for that, I don't think that I would be who I am today.

Thus, spirituality as described by the men, was a psychological component of success.

Spirituality was a mechanism through which they gained insights into things that might assist in the post-prison world. Through their understanding of spirituality, some men were able to focus on a new lifestyle thought to lessen the likelihood of returning to the things that led to their incarceration. For others, spirituality was a tool used to manage or deal with new responsibilities and challenges they would likely face after prison.

Maintaining mental health. Participants were likely to mention more than one coping strategy. George(18[31]7) relates spirituality to mental health. He states “spirituality . . . is what kept me sane throughout the years and coming out here after all those years and making this

adjustment . . . spirituality play[ed] a big part.” However, when he encountered situations that were beyond spiritual ministering, George(18[31]7) sought out mental health professionals: “I volunteered and went to a mental health [professional] because I was almost at a breaking point. As a breaking point I am talking about going back, doing what aided going back.”

Reggie(18[20]5) described maintaining his health and spirituality in one breathe as the “tools and elements that helped [him] be unique and be successful.” While not explained, I assume Reggie(18[20]5) was also implying that there were a number of activities he engaged in to maintain his mental health and spirituality. It seems that for some, thinking about a relationship with a supreme being was the activity, as they gave no indication of engaging in religious practices or other activities like attending church.

Maintaining physical health. The overlap continued when physical health was mentioned. Earlier I touched on a number of necessities related to a person’s quality of life including employment, housing, and education. Physical health was also included as a necessity for success. For example, Dave(18[19]12) stated “my health without a doubt because without that nothing else is possible.” However, mention of physical health was not prominent in the interview data. Besides these instances, the men did not single out physical health as an achievement expect to note that it was integral to their efforts to accomplish what they wanted.

Remaining drug free. Only four of the interviewees went to prison for drug related crimes. It is not clear how many actually used drugs. When the men talked of drug use they often linked it to mental health: George(18[31]7) said

One big thing that I really think that help me keep my sanity is I didn’t use drugs [after my release]. I haven’t, a lot of people thought I would have, but no smoking, no smoking marijuana or crack or whatever, no drinking wine, beer, hard liquor, none of that, no heroin or cocaine. Doctor prescribed medication as least as possible. I got to say that’s a big factor too.

James(17[15]33) attributed part of his post-prison success to “not having a drug problem” that he had to worry about. However, for participants like Chuck(30[20]10), who told of “using drugs for 28 years . . . success is ... being drug free” after release.

Limits to the ability to cope. As mentioned, there were a number of strategies and activities the men engaged in to facilitate their coping. During interviews, some of the men mentioned having to deal with the psychological effects of the prison experienced in order to achieve post-prison success. For example, George(18[31]7) said, “For me the long-term incarceration gave me some type of phobia. It gave me a phobia because a lot of things I get ready to do, I get right to the door and then I freeze up.” Reflecting on his prison experience, Artie(21[17]16) noted he had

to always refer back to the trauma part of the incarceration. . . . I’m still kind of healing from the post-traumatic effect of being incarcerated for a number of years and it’s something that may never heal totally, but we do our best to try to just cope and just trying to make yourself whole. . . . So the incarceration affected me to that degree where I am able to see that I’m not healed.

When asked if coping was success, he said

To be frank, I don’t know even know if I would use the word success. [Instead] it’s the sense of being able to cope with all the traumas from prison and then translate [that into] functioning at an optimum level with all these issues that you have as a result of the prison experience, and then coming out to society where people are supposed to be normal and try to make sense of being a productive citizen, if you will.

Even though not all the men coped with stress successfully, they coped well enough to remain out of prison and for them that was an indicator of success. Donald(22[10]24), said, “To me, my personal experience with success has been to learn how to rationally deal with my thoughts, my feelings, my actions, my reactions in the way that I deal with others.” In sum, 13 of the 17 men amongst our interviewees had gone to prison for violent crimes. If they had not learned how to cope with the new events and occurrences presented to them after prison, they

may have experienced “triggers” sending them “into a tailspin.” This much was true for Artie(21[17]16) who interpreted coping as a form of success. He believed failing to cope “with some of the ups and downs [after prison] . . . can send you in a frenzy.” To manage with the stressors and the stress responses associated with adjusting to life after prison, the men had to learn how to cope.

Fitting in

One of the biggest concerns for men returning from prison, and one that nearly all the men mentioned, is the desire to appear to others as if they had never been to prison. Some believe they wear visible marks of a prisoner including imagined physical features, jargon, and mannerisms. They feel stigmatized and believe they stand out and behave differently than “normal” people. Arron(21[27]7) spoke extensively about this experience:

When . . . first . . . released . . . after 27 years of being incarcerated, when I got back to society it was like everything was new. I didn’t know how to get on the train. I didn’t know how to get on the bus. I didn’t know what a metro card was or how to use a metro card, how do you extract one from a metro card port system. So everything was new, you know, everything was fresh as like, you know, just being born again and have to go through the steps to learn how do I fit in, how do I make it, how do I succeed, how do I be successful, how do I not go back to prison.

He also noted that

Coming out of prison you are still carrying a lot of stuff. . . . Because you did so much time in prison . . . so you carry it, whether you are aware of it, that you carry it or not, you are carrying it. . . . [Like an] old coat, it’s out of style I think that’s what I did. I think that a lot of stuff that I bought with me from prison maybe inadvertently, just because, you know, I have been there for so long . . . and you just pick up stuff you bring it.

Although the men expected fitting in to be difficult, Arron(21[27]7) was clear that being able to fit in was a sign of post-prison success.

To be successful after prison for me really means . . . to be able to move around the community and other communities and fit in as if you didn’t go ever with the prison but it’s much more difficult because again coming out after so many years everything is new.

The men interviewed expressed varying perspectives on their post-prison adjustments. Fitting in was found to be challenging even for those leaving prison with the expectation of opportunity after working hard to educate themselves. While having an education was perceived as a benefit, having an education did not provide the coping strategies necessary for solving all problems associated with post-prison life. Speaking philosophically, Jalil(23[15]17) emphasized the importance of social skills:

Education is but one component of his or her ability to operate. Because they don't have the socialization that goes with the education that they have acquired, they don't know how to conduct themselves in crowds. They don't know how to conduct themselves with people touching and talking. They're apprehensive about having a beer during a conversation, having a glass of wine during a meal or social events outside of sports which most people pay attention to because they haven't read the newspaper. They haven't casually picked up information that you'd normally get in the environment through osmosis. They haven't got those little subtle cues of socialization that allow you to move in and out of groups seamlessly because they've been confined.

For Jalil(23[15]17) fitting in was a kind of success beyond acquiring material things. Making this point, he notes:

No matter how successful many of our family members are, their success very often is gauged upon monetary [or material] success. The success that many ex-offenders who have become educated and have children . . . their success is gauged upon, in many cases, the ability they have to participate in the society at large. . . as part of the group that has rejected them. And in many cases, part of the group that their teachers have said they'd never be.

Thus, fitting in may be understood as the ability to participate in society just like every other member. Fitting in, as suggested earlier, for men returning from prison is akin to social success achieved via *reintegration* into the community. However, participants' comments highlight the complexity of achieving success for Black men leaving prisons and suggest they may be attempting to *integrate* into a society they may feel they were never a part. In this sense, fitting in relates to the social component of success because of its connection with an assessment of the

perceptions of others. Nevertheless, fitting in was what participants thought was key to getting on with their lives even if the realization was not immediate. It took at least a decade for

Frank(28[5]30) to define post-prison success in these terms. He observed

I didn't know what it [success] meant when I first got out. It took me 10, 15 years to really start to think about what success meant. . . Besides having a job, having a family life, having a social life, friends, and that sort of thing . . . I believe it has to do with . . . becoming, in many ways, invisible. . . What I mean by that is when, I tell someone I've been to prison . . . They don't believe me. That's what it [success] means to me now.

Success is fitting in as if never having been in prison.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the study. These findings are based on analysis of interview transcripts and were discussed in sections that corresponded with the major themes I found related to the meaning of success as defined by the formerly incarcerated Black men participating in this study.

In the next chapter, the Discussion, I will outline connections between some of the results and the literature, explore themes further, propose further research, and make practice recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Toward a Grounded Theory of Post-Prison Success

To better understand and identify factors that enable Black men who make the social and psychological adjustments needed to get on with their lives after prison, this research consisted of an exploration and description of the experiences of Black men in New York City three years or more after their release from prison. The purpose of this qualitative research was to give voice to formerly incarcerated Black men and to develop a theoretical understanding of post-prison success based on how these men defined success. Figure 1 provides a conceptual framework from which to examine responses to the primary research question: How do formerly incarcerated Black men define post-prison success?

Fitting-in: Summary of the Central Features

The African American men in this study, despite well-documented high recidivism rates, have succeeded based on definitions scholars have established in the research literature. However, for the men in this study, post-prison success is fitting-in; that is, success is appearing as if they have never been to prison. For them, fitting-in became possible after achieving material, social and psychological success. Fitting-in is far from automatic. The men see it as an on-going process that can take several years. Once released from prison, men seek to acquire basic needs, particularly stable housing and employment. According to the men, their ability to acquire their necessities was made possible by supportive family relationships, other supportive relationships and or with the help of social service agencies. Rather than being a linear process, fitting in is an entwined combination of the themes and categories discussed below.

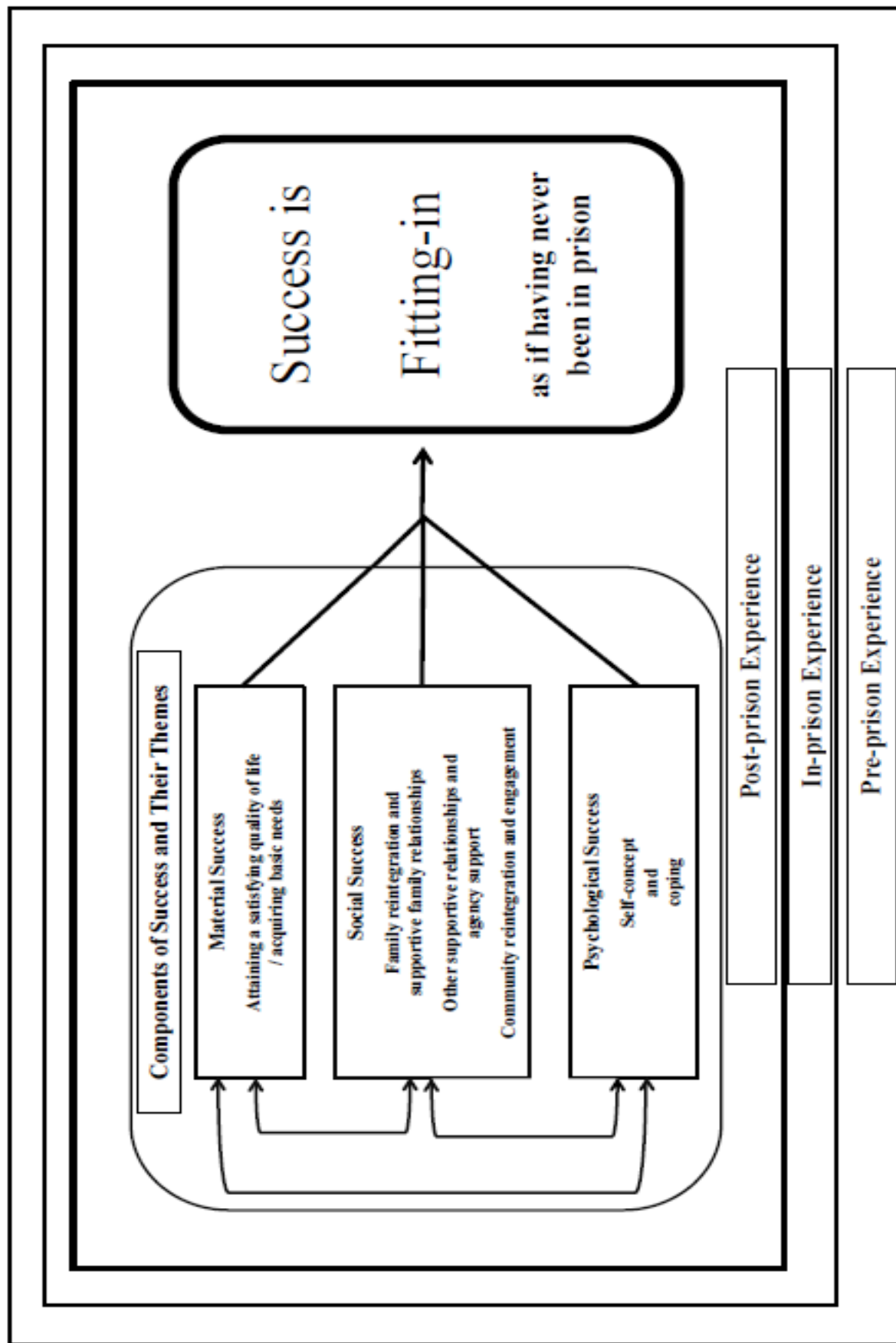


Figure 1 A conceptual framework of post-prison "success"

Figure 1

Figure 1 depicts success as a construct inclusive of material, social, and psychological components. I constructed these components from varying definitions of success found in the literature to help explain how *a priori* themes and those emerging from the data were related to the fitting-in process. As I alluded to above, there is a link between succeeding materially, attaining a satisfying quality of life, and acquiring basic needs. I saw connections between social success, family reintegration, and supportive family relationships. Social success was also linked with establishing other supportive relationships and agency support. I also connected social success with community reintegration and engagement. Finally, I associated succeeding psychologically with positive self-concept, self-worth, and coping. Oscar(18[10]11) implied these links in an exchange:

Well, I have to say the first thing that you can strive for is not to repeat that situation you just came from. So that can be an immediate form of success. And also provide the basic necessities, food, clothing, shelter. If you have been able to do that in a realistic timeframe, you're successful at that point because success is in different degrees. So you have to take your success based on your reality I think. So I think that will be our first degree of success.

Although Oscar(18[10]11) described the inter-relationship of the components of success, he makes no reference to fitting-in. This is because he is providing a description of success during the early phases of its development following release; he calls it the “first degree of success.” Oscar(18[10]11) has emphasized the need to stay out of prison during the early years following release as integral to success on any level. Researchers have described these early years as the critical period, a time when more than half of those released recidivate (Bahr, et al., 2005; Cooper, et. al., 2014; Langan & Levin, 2002). Reflecting on his journey and this phase in it, Oscar(18[10]11) was describing his desire to stay out of prison; a concern during that time that would remain throughout his journey. While reflecting on the early phase of his release

Arron(21[27]7) linked the various components of success and fitting-in as if he had never gone to prison. In an exchange, he said

Well, for me, from my personal experience I will just go back to when I first came out . . . after 27 years of being incarcerated. So for me one of the most important things for me was to be able to get employment. . . feed myself . . . have clothes. So now once I have got all those things in place and I can see what's in front of me, see what my goals are and make my achievement towards those goals, I will say like I have never been to prison because now I'm not really looking back on my life in prison, I'm looking at my life as if I had never went to prison.

(Interviewer) So success is just being able to see yourself or have others see you as if you have never been to prison before?

Yes. In so many ways because at this juncture in my life right now if I don't tell nobody that I ever went to prison they would never know. They would just be like, yo, listen, you know, you are a very intelligent person, you have a lot to offer, you are doing a good job, you are helping people, they would never know. And the minute I have said, well you know, this has been my experience, they'd be like, wow! Unbelievable, really?

Here Arron(21[27]7) is referring to how he sees himself. He goes on to claim that without disclosing his past, people he encounters would never know that he had been incarcerated. Thus, success in his mind is fitting-in as if he had never been to prison based on how he sees himself and how he thinks others perceive him. The next section contains insights from the major themes in the construct of *success* for Black men leaving prison: material, social and psychological.

The first section of the findings contained a description of what the men associated with material success. Within the major theme of attaining a satisfying quality of life and meeting basic needs, several categories emerged: remaining free with a defined quality of life, educational gains, finding employment and acquiring tangible symbols of success including housing.

Among the first of three major themes linked with succeeding socially was family reintegration and supportive family relationships. These themes were followed by other supportive relationships and agency support. The last of the three major themes linked with

succeeding socially included community reintegration and community activity. Family reintegration included rebuilding families and establishing intimate relationships (or simply sexual relationships). Participants linked family reintegration and supportive family relationships to their efforts to avoid associations with risky friends and negative behaviors. Other friendships and assistance from staff at social services agencies were also important, for example, friendships, social networks used for securing favorable social status as well as companionship, and help to secure entitlements or other aide. The men also found food stamps, for example, and other help from social agencies, important particularly during the initial months following release. Lastly, participation in community activities was integral to social success for a small number of the men. These men describe these activities as their giving back and contributing to the community's growth and development.

Last, for these Black men succeeding psychologically included notions of self-concept and coping. Self-concept incorporates a number of categories that relate to participants' feelings about self-worth and feeling that others also see their worth and humanity. After prison, the men sought to regain their humanity such that those they encountered thought of them as members of society like everyone else, rather than as the "other," the ex-con, felon, or ex-inmate. It also includes the men redefining themselves as full-fledged citizens. Equally important, psychological success included overcoming a number of stigmatized social identities, particularly that of the historically demonized Black man as being violent and dangerous (Cooper, 2013). Some men summed up success as personal autonomy: they longed to act and live independently or freely without being monitored or supervised as they were in prison and on parole.

In addition, the men associated psychologically success with acquiring effective coping strategies. For many, spirituality was a coping strategy. They linked spirituality to enhanced mental health and the ability to remain drug free. Spirituality provided them a moral foundation and a moral compass. Even so, the men were clear about the limits to their ability to cope, particularly during times of potential crisis.

The Relationship Between Pre-prison and In-prison Experiences

Figure 1 draws attention to the connections between the pre-prison, in-prison, and post-prison experiences and their influence on success. The men spoke of how pre-prison experiences contributed to their in prison experiences and how in-prison experiences helped them succeed when they were released. For men who entered prison with little formal education, they attended Adult Basic Education and GED classes and some attend college during their incarceration. Artie(21[17]16) said that in prison he “learned a lot. I didn’t even have a high school diploma when I entered into prison I was able to obtain my GED and get some college.” He, like a number of others mentioned how their being involved with in-prison religious communities, prison jobs, and being in solitary confinement all contributed to the people they became after release. Keith(17[15]29) summed it up by saying, “everything – it seems like everything I did after that from the time I started college and started getting involved with . . . [in-prison] programs, everything I did prepared me for what I’m doing today.”

The Framework, the Research Questions, and the Existing Literature

The central questions framing this inquiry were:

1. How do formerly incarcerated Black men define *success* after prison?

I asked additional questions to afford the men other opportunities to provide more details about their lived experiences and to further explain their meaning of success, namely

2. What were their post-prison experiences pursuing *success* as they define it?
3. How and in what ways did in-prison experiences shape their pursuit of *success* post-release?

The answers to these questions emerged from an integration of the themes from the interview data reported in Chapter 4. What follows is a discussion of the findings in relationship to the existing literature.

Fitting-in

And a lot of people that I encountered, because I do shipping and receiving, they don't even know I was in prison ...That's what I always wanted. Reggie(18[20]5)

All the men interviewed desired to fit in their home community and workplace as if they had never been to prison. Fitting-in captures the purpose underlying their efforts to attain success in the material, social and psychological aspects of their lives. Without gaining a footing in these three areas, they would not feel a sense of psychological success or social success. Dictionary definitions suggest that fitting-in is established through social relationships, connections to groups, a sense of belonging, and being “accepted by a group of people because you are similar to them” (fit-in, n.d.). The Cambridge online dictionary defines fit-in as “to feel that you belong to a particular group and are accepted by that group.”

Historians have elaborated on this concept since the 1930s (Recken, 1993). Although the context of its application was different, having occurred during the Great Depression, the reasons why fitting-in emerged as a theme then are similar to the realities confronted by formerly incarcerated Black men today. Rather than aspire for wealth and status, success was redefined in the 1930s “in terms appropriate to the social and economic realities which confronted the majority of Americans in all aspects of their lives . . . [and stressed] the need to belong” (Recken, 1993, p. 205).

A number of parallels may be drawn between the economic conditions of those times and the lack of economic resources Black men are likely to endure following release from prison today. Dire economic conditions experienced by both generations create “anxiety which in turn intensified the desire to belong” (Recken, 1993, p. 205). Recken (1993, p. 206) suggests that when people are confronted with these economic realities they “seemed to fear losing their sense of place in community.” Similarly, Black men returning from prison seeking to establish a place in their home communities, may still feel they were never a part of the larger society, particularly when denied economic opportunities. None of the men interviewed suggested that they were returning to high social or economic status. Like those lacking wealth during the Depression, Black men in this study sought “the protection of family and friends to counteract insecurity and feelings of . . . frustration and isolation” accruing from the immediate barriers to their reintegration and from the expected lifetime consequences of incarceration that generally play out in the larger society (Recken, 1993, p. 206).

The inability to gain access to and participate within the larger society have been characterized as invisible punishments and collateral consequences after release from prison that make more difficult fitting-in for formerly incarcerated Black men (Drucker, 2011; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Mbuba, 2102; Petersila, 2003; Pinard, 2010; Travis, 2002). These generally include voter disenfranchisement, the denial of social benefits, employment barriers, being denied access to higher education, and in some instances access to public housing among others. It seems likely that fitting-in for formerly incarcerated Black men, like Americans during the Depression Era, had been the only encouraging conception of success. This alternative understanding may reflect a reduced expectation about what they might be able to achieve given their understanding of the socio-economic realities of the day. Similarly, formerly incarcerated

Black men tempered their post-prison expectation based on their socio-economic realities at release, coupled with political and public perceptions of their social status. It may be that this lowering of expectations results from the psychological oppression and diminished social status endured during incarceration. A number of scholars have noted that the psychological effects of incarceration are likely to manifest and endure for some time following release (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2003; Herman, 1992; Kling 1941; Schnittker & John, 2007). Among others, these effects might include an “internalized view of self as negative and as not deserving more resources or increased participation in societal affairs” (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996, p. 130).

None of the men in the sample expected to experience racial discrimination after their release, and only one man expressed experiencing discrimination he believed was based on race. However, while men in this study may have muted their expectations and experience of racial discrimination, the racism within the socio-political environment of their return coupled with justice involvement is likely to influence outcomes for similar Black men (Franklin, 1999; Pierre, Woodland, & Mahalik, 2001; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). None of the men I interviewed “realistically aspire(d) . . . to wealth and power; consequently the material symbols of success receive(d) less attention” during our interviews (Recken, 1993, p. 206).

Rather than suggest that the men had no desire for material success, they did seem content to secure basic needs and find their place with those who they knew prior to their incarceration, as was the case among the working class of the Depression Era (Recken, 1993). It seems that the Black men in this study tempered their expectations so that they could succeed rather than imagine and desire an existence that, in the past, they achieved through illicit means. This reasoning connects well with how the men defined material success and its relative importance as they attempted to fit-in to their world as if they had never been to prison.

Theme 1: Attaining a Satisfying Quality of Life

Quality of life was among the *a priori* themes supported by the findings. Many of the recidivism-reduction programs I reviewed prior to this research aimed to improve the quality of life for those released from prison (Wright, et al., 2014). They also included positive employment outcomes, obtaining housing, and educational advancements. However, scholars have not reached any consensus on the meaning of quality of life (Barcaccia, Matarese, Bertolaso, Elvira, & De Marinis, 2013). According to the Center for Disease and Prevention (CDC, 2000), quality of life is affected by housing, employment (jobs), education (school), neighborhood, culture, values, and spirituality. Barcaccia and her colleagues (2013) concluded that quality of life is best understood through the subjective lens of those asked what it is. For James(17[15]33)

quality of life [is] defined by the individual, but it should, I would think that it would include employment, it would include family, a dollar in your pocket, you know, all relative, but a quality in life that's consistent with the hopes and aspirations of the individual.

Obtaining housing, gainful employment and making educational gains are symbols of material success. Based on previous research, I anticipated that they would mention these symbols in their definitions of post-prison success, and that they would expect them to be difficult to attain in light of their justice involvement (Drucker, 2011; Pinard, 2006; Solomon, 2012; Weiman, 2007). It was not clear from the findings whether their expectations of material success were tempered by their experiences as Black men. Nevertheless, obtaining these symbols seemed to make fitting-in to their community more likely. Although the men made frequent references to quality of life, housing, education, and employment, they did not describe these things as the most important elements of success. This may be because most were in possession of one or more of these items years before the interviews or because the men may take these

items for granted the longer they remain out of prison. Similarly, staying out of prison is a necessary part of post-prison success and fitting-in on any level. However, the men did not suggest that staying out of prison alone was a sign of material success. For example, while a person may stay out of prison their status may go undetected because they are street homeless, unemployed, and or living in a shelter receiving public benefits. In Figure 1, I placed succeeding socially at the center of the three components of success because it is a significant aspect of fitting-in as if never having been to prison. It is to the themes linked with social success that I now turn.

Theme 2: Family Reintegration and Family Support

The sustained interruption of family relationships makes family reintegration a challenge upon release. As a result, I have categorized success related to social functioning as “social success.” Within this component of success, I anticipated that (re)establishing intimate relationships with women and (re)establishing family ties would be among the leading success themes. I coded this theme 16 times during analysis of my interviews. One example followed when Ulysses(21[15]24) stated: “Success means to reintegrate into your family, you know, because you've been removed from the family . . . so for me . . . it's to reintegrate into my biological family.” In addition to the families they left behind, the men spoke of starting new families and new intimate relationships. For example, one of the men who had been imprisoned at the age of 17, said that “being successful after prison was . . . establishing a family life . . . outside of a prison. . . [by having an] intimate relationship with somebody, and also . . . having children.”

A number of potential explanations suggest why family reintegration would be important to these Black men. For example, as a social unit the family is likely to assist men in acclimating

to the social environment of their community. Jalil(23[15]17) alludes to this when he noted that the success of those returning from prison is predicated upon the “ability they have to participate in the society at large.”

Stays in prison are apt to loosen family ties particularly when people endure long periods of incarceration while being housed hundreds of miles away from their home communities (Waleed, 2010). Christy A. Visher and Jeremy Travis (2003) have long since recognized that leaving prison and successfully reentering society is influenced by a number of factors including an individual’s social environment of peers, family, and community. A good portion of those returning to the community will initially reside with a family member. Post-prison family relationships including emotional support, acceptance, and encouragement are all related to post-release success (Cobbina, Huebner, & Berg, 2010; Waleed, 2010). Some researchers found that persons who succeeded on parole were more likely to live with a pro-social spouse or significant other and had what they described as a good relationship with them (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009). Imprisonment early in life interrupts healthy social development in the family and makes family integration difficult as well. Seven research participants were incarcerated between the ages of 16 and 18; all of these men spent at least a third of their lives (10 years) in prison prior to being released (see Table 2).

The Black men in this study returned from prison seeking material and emotional support from their families (Davis, et al., 2012). They sought to reintegrate into a family role as husband, parent, or son (Waleed, 2010). These findings support the notion that family reintegration and family support would be key components of social success and fitting-in. Moreover, recent research has included family support among a host of factors affecting

recidivism as well (Davis, et al., 2012; McKiernan, Shamblen, Collins, Strader, & Kokoski, 2012; Stahler, et al., 2013).

Some researchers suggest that family ties facilitate pro-social thinking about the roles that former incarcerates might assume and “reinforces [the] perception of themselves as [potentially] a contributing member of society” (Berg & Huebner, 2011, p. 386). It seems that these positive perceptions are integral to the social aspects of the fitting-in process and is likely associated with psychological success discussed below.

However, Martinez and Abrams (2011) note that family members expected to provide material and emotional support may also be sources of stress resulting from pressure to meet their expectations. Discussing the family stress factor, George(18[31]7) stated “The most stressful part that almost broke me was when my brother tried to send me back to prison.” Similarly James(17[15]33), said “I would say that the first couple of years I used to tell people, I used to think, I didn’t tell a lot of people this, my professional life was great, my personal life was hell. I was married.”

Despite these examples, research has shown that higher percentages of those who did not return to prison compared to those that did (85% vs 70%) counted their family as helpful with respect to their reintegration (Bahr, et al., 2010). In my findings, all except one of the participants in this study returned from prison receiving some form of material support from a family member including housing; only one did not return to live with a family member. Although the majority of participants in this study received material and other support from family members, most found other relationships and supports key to their success as well.

Theme 3: Other Relationships and Support

Bahr and other researchers (Bahr, et al., 2010) have established a link between post-prison outcomes and supportive relationships outside of the family. Prosocial relationships come in many forms. They can ease the reentry experience and increase the probability of long-term success after prison (Maruna & Immarigeon 2004; Petersilia 2003; Visher and Travis 2003; Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009)). For example, mentors can provide links to job opportunities and help people manage the perceived stigma of the incarceration credential (Cochran, 2014).

The interview questions did not ask directly about the influence of post-prison friendships, but there were general questions about relationships. The responses of the men indicated that “support relationships,” professional networks, and professional people, and similar types of associates were extremely helpful as they sought to be successful in their new world. Arron(21[27]7) believed that “a big part of being . . . successful [was being] able to interact with . . . professional people.”

I did anticipate that supports from social service agencies would be crucial to the post-prison success of many because of changes in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, that included a lifetime ban on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Food Stamps for those convicted of a drug offense, and because of federal housing laws that either banned or made it difficult to house the formerly incarcerated in public housing (Allard, 2002; Drucker, 2011; Pinard, 2010; Rubinstein & Mukamal, 2002).

Lin describes social supports as “the perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners” (1986, p. 18). Some men did receive assistance from social service agencies in the form of public assistance, SSI entitlements, and food stamps to “stay afloat,” particularly when first released.

Leon(42[32]5) did not have a family to return to and relied on a social service agency for shelter as well as other people for his basic necessities. Such supports aided the study participants and increased the likelihood of fitting-in to their home communities while incrementally working to improve their situations.

Theme 4: Community Reintegration and Engagement

Findings from this study indicated a desire among 11% (2) of the sample to “give back” or to be involved in community life in a positive way. Overall, civic and sociopolitical engagement is not a priority for men returning home from prison and most (89%) did not become active in their community. My findings on community reintegration are consistent with the existing literature. A number of scholars point out (Resnik, Bradford, Glynn, Jette, Johnson-Hernandez, & Wills, 2012) that the concept generally refers to discharge from a total institution (such as a hospital or prison) from which an individual had been isolated over a relatively long period and is subsequently return to community life. Black men in this study sought to (re)engage in social roles related to normal community life as one of their post-prison goals. Leon(42[32]5) was an exception; he had an interest in helping the men he left behind in prison, so he went back inside New York prisons to be of service. He saw his volunteering as part of his success. He was in his seventies at the time of the interviewed and had spent more than three decades in prison.

However, scholars have given no attention to participation in collective sociopolitical action to restore the constitutional rights of formerly incarcerated people as an aspect of community reintegration (Resnik, et al., 2012) in the face of the rise of the carceral state and the rise of a more supervised society (Miller, Miller, Djoric, & Patton, 2015). Moreover, a number of scholars have found that formerly incarcerated people are less likely to participate in any form of

political activity even when there are no legal restrictions preventing them (Gerber, Meredith, Huber, Biggers, & Hendry, 2015; Sugie, 2015; White, 2015). While family and friendship (social) networks remain important for successful community reintegration, current reentry strategies make the greater part of this effort the responsibility of reentrants and their families (Miller, et al., 2015). Many of the in-prison and reentry programs feature person-centered approaches that seek to alter the thinking of former incarcerates. Current program approaches are rooted in the assumption that formerly incarcerated people are naturally inclined to criminal or otherwise antisocial activities (Miller, et al., 2015). None of these approaches acknowledges or encourages addressing criminogenic factors that plague communities former incarcerates returned to or structural impediments that make reintegration difficult (Miller, et al., 2015). More importantly, I found no programs designed to encourage civic or political engagement.

Including sociopolitical activities as an aspect of community reintegration would expand its meaning to include civic engagement, community organizing, quickening of the restoration of the franchise, and the fight for other rights and attributes of citizenship. This approach would reflect an effort to empower returning Black men to address structural issues related to their return and some of the criminogenic factors responsible for social situations that may encourage anti-social and criminal activity. In summary, community reintegration as envisioned by the men in this study is not a priority. However, social success does not fully account for what the men meant by fitting in as if never have been in prison before. There was a psychological component to fitting in all the men articulated.

Theme 5: Self-Concept

Evidence relating to the negative effects of incarceration and the psychological well-being of otherwise mentally sound individuals has been well-documented (Haney & Zimbardo,

1998; Kaye, 2008; Liebling & Maruna, 2013; Zimbardo, 1973). There is evidence suggesting that the negative effects of incarceration including discrimination and stigma (LeBel, 2012a; LeBel, 2012b; Maruna, 2011; Moran, 2012), affect post-prison adjustment (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2003; 2012; Kling 1941) including a significant negative effect on both mental and physical health (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Nonetheless, I found examples of strategies the participants used to resist the internalization of social stereotypes (Becker, 1963; Tannenbaum, 1957), strengthen their self-concept, and get on with their lives.

For example, when Leon(42[32]5) was released from prison, he found it difficult to blend in and “sometimes would go to places and sneak out” after being there for a while because he “would feel that [he didn’t] fit in.” It is now clear that his avoidance (Holahan, Moos, Holahan, Brennan, & Schutte, 2005) and leaving a social setting, was a coping strategy used to deal with feelings he held about himself and a setting with which he felt uncomfortable.

I perceive that the effort by some of the men to redefine themselves is another strategy used to deal with the stigma of the incarceration credential and to promote in their minds a positive self-concept. At the center of this strategy is an effort to dis-identify with a prisoner identity and associated behaviors that often accompany persons released from prison that visibly link them with that past. This strategy facilitates social status in the larger society and a positive self-concept. For example, men would cease to identify themselves as an ex-convict, avoid the use of prison jargon, simply try to smile, and be pleasant.

In my experience working with formerly incarcerated Black men, men I encouraged this approach, as did the men in this study, by suggesting that they associate with as many people as possible who know nothing about their incarceration. As explained by Frank(28[5]30), these new associations would allow the men’s past to stay invisible unless they choose to mention it.

This allows the men to make something else visible instead—a different, competent, and successful persona for the world to see.

For example, James(17[15]33) chose to make his competency as an employee visible. Doing so increased both his social success and psych (self-concept) success. Like other men, he used employment experiences to redefine himself. James(17[15]33) employment took him “completely out of the world of being an ex-offender.” At his workplace, few knew him as a formerly incarcerated person. His workplace did not remind him of the incarceration credential, and he found no need to remind himself of it. In his capacity as a high-ranking officer in the Salvation Army, he traveled around the country, raised funds for the organization, sat, and talked with corporate officers, legislatures, and other public officials. To this point, James(17[15]33) remarked that

being in a situation having experiences where there was no need [to disclose the past] facilitated this feeling of freedom, I guess, I mean because that was success. I am free and thinking about that I am free to do this, I am free to do that.

James’(17[15]33) experience is an example of how the men used their life experiences to redefine themselves and improved their self-concept.

For some of the men, self-reflections were important steps in building positive self-concept. During times of introspection, men thought better of themselves, and affirmed themselves as positive human beings. These reflections are part of the redefinition process and facilitate a change in their thinking, morality, attitudes about themselves, and their past. This interpretation is supported by Steele’s (1988) self-affirmation theory, which posits that people are moved to put forth in their minds a positive image of themselves when they perceive a self-image threat (also see Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993). In essence, the men affirmed positive notions about themselves to counter negative stereotypes they assumed the public held about

formerly incarcerated people, Black men, and or both; groups that they belonged (Steele, 1997). When faced with what Steele (1997, p.616, 617) calls a “stereotype threat,” the Black men in this study took action to counteract the threat and neutralize their fears of “being treated and judged in terms of . . . the negative group stereotype [being Black, being formerly incarcerated or both].”

Theme 6: Coping

The findings provided some vivid examples of the connection between self-concept, success, and the desire to fit in. Although each man took a different approach, they claimed strategies ranging from avoidance, to redefining the self, using employment experiences, self-reflection, positive self-affirmation and others, to help enhance their well-being. A positive self-concept seemed essential for well-being, contributed to their fitting-in, and psychologically success. Varying forms of coping activities were also integral to the psychological success the men achieved.

I interpreted a number of actions taken by the men in this study to be strategies used to deal with a perceived or actual psychological threat or stress (Lazarus, 1993) to manage resource imbalances (Friedman & Allen, 2011) related to their reintegration efforts. Lazarus (1993) defines coping “as ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 237). Well known are the barriers to reintegration that tax resources and that are extremely stressful (Western, Braga, Davis, & Sirois, 2015). In addition to these, formerly incarcerated Black men carry the burden of racism as they attempt to navigate the new world filled with a change in routine, the urban mass transit system, and new technology (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Western, et al., 2015). In addition to these challenges, some “45,000 laws restrict former

prisoners from full participation in the social, civic, and political life of their communities” (Miller, et al., 2015, p. 464).

Fifteen (88%) of the men spoke of coping strategies they used to manage their post-prison experiences. They mentioned adherence to religious teachings, a variety spiritual practices, avoidance, seeking help from mental health professionals or psychologist to maintain or address mental health concerns, engaging in activities to maintain their physical health, and remaining drug free. However, I was not clear about what the men in this study were using their coping strategies to address. There is literature suggesting that they were coping with stress resulting from discrimination in an environment that generally devalues, disempowers, and makes them (Black men) feel invisible (Franklin, 1999; Pierre, Woodland & Mahalik, 2001). They may have used their coping strategies to counter the hurt they felt because of these perceptions. It is also likely that their strategies were meant to target the stress associated with adjustment following their incarceration or cope with the effects of the psychological pain endured during their incarceration after release.

Harrell (2000) warns that the experience of racism should not be reduced to an experience of stress. There is literature related to disparate treatment based on race (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999) generally perceived as a life stressor that formerly incarcerated Black men will endure (Brondolo, Ver Halen, Pencille, Beatty, & Contrada, 2009). Clark and his colleagues (1999) suggest that Black people in this society develop coping strategies to deal with institutional racism and personal slights to manage these experiences. Some researchers suggest that formerly incarcerated people return to drug use as a coping strategy to deal with the stress of reintegration, particularly when unemployed and homeless (Harding, Wyse, Dobson, & Morenoff, 2014). I did not ask any of the four men in this study

convicted for drug offenses or any of the others about their crimes whether they used drugs. I suspect that even those not charged with drug offenses may have used drugs prior to their incarceration because drug use was a concern regardless of conviction type. Recent data on recidivism show that about one in four of those arrested within three years following release were charged with drug offenses (Durose, Cooper & Snyder, 2014). None of those who had a history of drug use provided any reason explaining why or if they used drug. In addition, none of the participants provided any information about what they did to remain drug free except for Chuck(30[20]10) who turned his life over to a supreme being: “You know you can't do nothing without His strength. You know. So He makes everything possible. And because if I wouldn't have gave my life to Him, I would have went back out on the corners.”

A number of the men in this study voiced concern about being able to cope with the psychological effects of their incarceration. The men did not detail any other activities they engaged in to cope with these effects besides seeking help from a mental health counselor or relying on their spirituality or spiritual activities. Literature related to the intersectionality of social identities and oppression (Perry, Harp, & Oser, 2013) support the finding that multiple factors determine the coping strategies employed by these men—their ethnicity, their being former incarcerates, and the psychological effects of incarceration. The men perceive their coping with any or all of these factors as a form of psychological success. The men in this study have remained out of prison well passed the time that most return, adjusting and adapting varying approaches to manage stressors to ensure that they are fitting in and getting on with their lives. The lessons learned from these men have implications for social work practice and policies related to successfully reintegrating formerly incarcerated Black men.

Limitations of the Study

This study examined the perceptions of 17 formerly incarcerated Black men seeking to understand how they defined post-prison success. Although the interviews provided a wealth of data, the research project was not designed to be generalizable to all formerly incarcerated Black men in New York State or elsewhere. Moreover, all of the men in this study lived in the New York City area, more than half of those leaving New York prisons do not.

Besides issues related to generalizability, the eligibility requirements for this study were limited to men who had been out of prison at least three years. It is probable that length of time since release influenced the definitions of success advanced by the men in this study—the longer they have experienced stability in meeting their basic needs, the more the stresses of feeling unstable may have faded in their memory. Moreover, unlike many others leaving prison, all the men in this study except one, had important assets to rely upon immediately following release, including housing and family support. Thus, the study may not have adequately represented concerns likely to surface during the first year or two years following release. Similarly, the study's retrospective research design makes it difficult to know how definitions of success may evolve, if they do, overtime, and when. Statements made by some of the men highlighted as much when they pointed out that success was in different degrees, that it had multiple parts, and that it was subject to change because of the changing situations a person released from prison encountered.

As already mentioned, there is an interaction between pre-prison, in-prison and post-prison experiences that were not fully explored in this study. Scholars note the importance of pre-prison experiences and their relationship to preexisting patterns of behavior, attitudes, and values and how these are likely to influence the prison experience (Irvin & Cressey, 1962;

Morris & Worrall, 2014). It is likely that the pre-prison period included influential experiences that would have shed additional light on how men functioned while in-prison and may have related to their post-prison experiences as well, particularly when first released.

There is always the uncertainty of how the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee influences the trustworthiness of the data in any study. However, I did take precautions to insure trustworthiness (See Chapter 3). They included bracketing my personal experience as much as I could, reviewing ideas surfaced during the interviews with others, including formerly incarcerated people not interviewed, and consulting with my research peers and colleagues on multiple occasions. Nonetheless, I am part of the population I am studying, and I would have qualified for participation in it. Thus, my own experiences with the subject matter may have produced bias. For example, when the men talked, their experiences were striking similarities to what I experienced. In my research memos, I wrote of feeling as if I was just having conversations with the men—reminiscing about old times, and past, shared experiences. I wrote as if I was revisiting a place where I had been; *I was there*. I wrote in my notebook, “the stories are the same” and of feeling surprised by a simultaneous statement uttered between a participant and I. In my memo that day I wrote, “we spoke the same words at the same time.” Although I took precautions, because the stories were the same, because we spoke at the same words at the same time, in addition to interpreting what the men said, I am uttering what I knew to be true.

Recommendation for Future Research

It remains unclear how the struggles during the first three years following release contribute to reaching the three-year milestone generally signaling success. There is a need for additional research that compares the experiences of men during this phase of re-entry who

recidivate to those who have moved beyond the three-year mark. This research may provide insight on varying priorities during each period and varying definitions of success. To date, I have found no reference to community reintegration as a concept clearly conceptualized, operationalized, or applied to formerly incarcerated Black men. Precise conceptualization might lead to the development of activities and strategies that increase the likelihood of its achievement and men fitting in as if they had never gone to prison. Even so, most of the men in this study were not active in the community.

In addition, there is a need for additional research to account for the potential influence of time served in prison, time since release from prison, time served under community supervision, total time in the community, age at incarceration, age at release, and other potentially influencing issues related to time upon success and or achievement. This analysis might provide insights about developmental issues and post-prison success. For example, about 40% of the Black men in this study entered prison when they were less than 21 years of age. One might expect that there are variations in life experiences and development between men entering prison who were less than 21 years of age and those who may have entered when older. Exploring how these realities may affect varying conceptualization of success might lead to the development of tailor-made strategies to help men succeed.

About a third of the men made specific reference to what they believed were the psychological effects of the incarceration experience and its relationship to their post-prison experiences. Haney (2003b; 2012b) provides a number of leads to facilitate a basic understanding of the link between the psychological impact of incarceration and post-prison adjustment. Additional research is needed to relate these ideas to the post-prison experiences of Black men. In addition, this current study was unable to account for the pre-prison experiences

of Black men, how those experiences might relate to post-prison definitions of success, or the experiences of Black men as they seek to become successful. Moreover, the pre-prison trauma of Black men is the type of trauma that researchers often ignore in analysis of justice-involved populations (Rich & Grey, 2005). Research is needed to determine whether there is a relation to this form of historical trauma of Black men, their continued traumatization during incarceration, and post prison outcomes.

Finally, this research included references to the institutionalization or prisonization of people entering US prisons. I failed to find any reference to any research documenting how the prisonization process is reversed. In addition to fitting in as if one never had been in prison, I thought the men in this study were also describing the process of deinstitutionalization, deinstitutionalization, or how they had reversed their prisonization. I did consult formerly incarcerated people who were not part of the study about the meaning of deinstitutionalization or deinstitutionalization while asking about the activities involved in the process. I was not able to get a clear indication of the activities that might be involved in the process although there was a clear understanding of what was meant by the term. When I sought additional details about how it was done, I was told it was done alone, a person had to do it all by themselves. Although the term deinstitutionalization has meaning and application in other disciplines (Cherlin, 2004; Davis, Diekmann, & Tinsley, 1994; Oliver, 1992; Shen & Snowden, 2014), no application had been found linking it to justice involved populations. Based on what the men offered in this study, research is needed to develop a conceptual definition of deinstitutionalization, perhaps deinstitutionalization, defined here as the process of *reversing* or *undoing* the extent to which an incarcerated person has been socialized to prison culture, prison life, its dimensions and activities.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Social Work's Person-In-Environment Perspective

The findings detailed in this study suggest that social workers need to apply social work's person-in-environment perspective to social work practice with justice-involved Black men. The supervised society in which the Black men in this study emerged is rooted in an institutional teleology that criminalizes, pathologizes, and demonizes those burdened with the three aforementioned negative social identities (Arrigo, Bersot, & Sellers, 2011; Miller, et al., 2015; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Social workers serving Black men with a history of justice involvement may not ignore these environmental realities weighed with institutional barriers to full reintegration, nor may they ignore the potentially damaging aftereffects of confinement. The work of the social worker must balance multiple social (public safety) and individual interests while remaining true to the primary focus of their task - seek social justice. While there is considerable debate among social workers about exactly what social justice means (Morgaine, 2014), the preamble to the NASW *Code of Ethics* (2008) captures the essence of the idea.

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's *focus on individual well-being in a social context* (emphasis added) and the well-being of society. *Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living* (emphasis added).

This is not the place to discuss or debate matters related to the meaning of social justice. However, in addition to being inspired by social work's core principles (social justice, dignity

and worth of the person, and others), the application of the person-in-environment perspective would enhance the assessment process, the development of intervention practice models linked with an assessment inclusive of the multiple dimensions integral to the person-environment configuration, advocacy, and activism among social workers serving formerly incarcerated Black men (DeVeaux, 2014). To be effective, social workers must discard views that continue the criminalization of formerly incarcerated Black men that cast them “as deviant, dependent, and in need of personal transformation, rather than [seek] structural change” (Miller, et al., 2015, p. 466). Miller and his colleagues (2015, p. 466) suggest that traditional policies and practices reflecting this perspective are rooted in

a reformist ethic [that] misrepresents the wills, intentions, and proclivities of [formerly incarcerated Black men while] . . . transmit[ing] messages about the appropriate kinds of behavior former prisoners should engage in, and the kinds of people who participate in or refuse to take part in these practices.

The person-in-environment perspective provides an alternative approach when used to develop social work policies, procedures, and service delivery because “it has a tendency to be inclusive of both [the personal and structural] perspectives in its methods” (DeVeaux, 2014, p. 109). In the past, social work differentiated itself from other professions by its recognition of the interrelationship between policy and practice that did not encourage the internalization of oppressive and negative self-concepts, while encouraging community organizing, advocacy and activism as part of intervention strategies that elevated personal problems to public issues (Davis & Hagen, 1992; Morgaine, 2014). To be fair, “there is no agreed upon meaning, interpretation, or method of implementing a person-in-environment approach primarily because there are

varying fields of practice and functions in social work where conflicting meanings and practices play out” (DeVeaux, 2014, p. 109). However, DeVeaux (2014, p. 110) has rightly

imagine[d] a person-in-environment approach inclusive of activism and advocacy aimed at social reform, societal transformation, or changes in social environments that adversely affect individuals, lest social work fail to remain true to its pro-reform mandates.

Furthermore, it must include . . . the notion that individuals are active agents co-constructing and recreating their social environments.

This is an empowering concept and an important feature of this approach because of its conceptualization of individuals as active agents co-constructing and recreating their social environments rather than as subjects of “institutional arrangements that . . . ensure [their over reliance] on the mercy of others” (Miller, et al., 2015, p. 467). My findings suggest that the success of the Black men in this study is based in large part upon their acting as agents in constructing space for themselves in an adverse environment. It is that ability, coupled with a critical analysis of the environment that gave them the power to influence their destiny. The person-in-environment approach is a method of analysis important to assessment and intervention that may add to this process for others as well.

Fulfill Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

Despite having a historical relationship with justice matters that dates back to the 19th century (Reamer, 2004; Roberts & Brownell, 1999; 2002; Roberts, Springer, & Browell, 2007), contemporary social workers play a reduced role in debates about policy, procedure, and service deliver reforms for the justice involved (Wilson, 2010). This reduced role results from a failure of social workers to fulfill ethical responsibilities to the broader society detailed in the Social Workers’ Code of Ethics. Consequently, criminologist and others have had their way in

“refocus[ing justice] work toward the safety and security of society and away from the traditional values of the social work profession in empowering individuals and building community capacity” (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier & Sinha, 2008, p. 191). Justice involved people remain among the most disregarded and devalued of groups despite the social work professional commitment to marginalized and oppressed people (Roberts & Brownell, 1999). A lack of activism on behalf of and alongside justice advocates has contributed to the current punitive justice environment and a disempowering pedagogy taught formerly incarcerated people and others that discourage addressing the criminogenic factors responsible for their social situations (Miller et al., 2015; van Wormer, Springer & Maschi, 2012). It may be that the historical tension within social work related to its perceived function, social reform versus individual treatment, has contributed to social works lack of meaningful leadership in justice related matters (Abramovitz, 1998; Haynes, 1998; Wyers, 1991).

Aware of this tension and the “value conflict between social work and criminal justice professionals,” more enlightened scholars “remind fellow social workers that almost every facet of social work intersects with criminal justice” (Pettus-Davis, 2012, p. 3). Rather than yield to the values promulgated by others with narrow interest, social workers must endeavor to act based upon its clearly defined ethical responsibility to the broader society. “Social workers do not assume social problems are simply individual problems that can be ameliorated once the individual is treated” (Pettus-Davis, 2012, p. 5). This tendency has to be reversed. If social workers are to remain true to the Social Workers’ Code of Ethics, they must be fully engaged in justice issues on all levels, assume a leadership role in matters concerning the justice-involved, and let their justice work be informed by social work’s social and political values (DeVeaux, 2014). These include efforts to advance policies and legislation to improve social conditions,

particularly those in which criminogenic factors fester [see Social Work Code of Ethics 6.04 (a)]; expand choice and opportunity for those with a history of justice involvement [see Social Work Code of Ethics 6.04 (b)]; and engage to eliminate the collateral consequences of incarceration and institutional discrimination against those with a history of justice involvement [see Social Work Code of Ethics 6.04 (d)] (NASW, 2008).

A first step in this direction requires emphasizing these points in curriculum used by social work students in general and particularly those interested in working with justice-involved populations (DeVeaux, 2014).

Conclusion

The voices of formerly incarcerated Black men in this qualitative research were used to define post-prison success based on their lived experiences. Success, as they defined it, it is a construct that includes material, social and psychological components. In addition to defining success, this study documents how Black men were fitting-in to society as if they had not been to prison. Despite study participants fitting-in, my personal experience suggests that the psychic wounds may never be wholly healed until real meaning and a sense of closure is given to the concept of repaying one's debt to society. Every now and then formerly incarcerated people are reminded of their former incarceration. It seems that what is missing from policies and programs is a willingness of many members of the society to forgive offenses committed in the past and allow those previously owing a debt to get on with their lives. More troubling is the intersectionality of race and how race makes it difficult for the dominant group to interact with Blacks as equals, particularly those with past justice involvement. Some 37 years after my conviction, I have found this to be the case. It is hoped that social workers will improve their

practice approach to justice involved Black men and provide more leadership in our collective effort to usher in change.

Epilogue

My findings shed light on how Black men defined success after prison. My findings did not shed much light on the connection between factors I deem related to the way formerly incarcerated Black men are perceived, the work needed to change those perceptions, and a successful program model that might facilitate the reintegration of other former incarcerates.

Advocacy: Amend the Thirteenth Amendment of the US Constitution

My review of literature related to the historical context giving rise to the targeted incarceration of Black men in the US suggests that very few contemporary scholars make the link between the US system of slavery and the US system of imprisonment. Among those that do, they tend to focus upon racism and its impact on social policies around the justice system while briefly mentioning the slave system in discussions related to the historical context put forth for readers to review (Alexander, 2010; Christianson, 1998; Perkinson, 2010). They do not, however, call for any legislative action that focuses squarely on the United States Constitution. As I understand them, current policies are not enough to reframe justice matters in the United States. Moreover, existing policies are not designed to influence how we think about reentry and those affected by these policies (See S.1513 - Second Chance Reauthorization Act). My findings did not shed much light on this connection either.

Nevertheless, the 13th Amendment of the US Constitution includes an obvious legislative loophole that provides means to continue, in a legal way, the institution of slavery such that federal and state governments, rather than private citizens, are official slave holders. Prior to the enactment of this law, the US economy had a significant agricultural base supported by free

slave labor. Slavery was clearly race based as was the application of laws that targeted newly “freed” Black people (namely the Black Codes). These laws, old and new, fuel the mass and disproportionate incarceration of Black people. It seems illogical to omit these factors from any historical overview related to incarceration or the reentry of the today’s prison population because persons of color continue to be targeted and disproportionately incarcerated even after having gone through the system. This law details in clear language a function of state sanctioned punishment for those convicted of a crime that does not relate to the traditional functions of punishment generally associated with imprisonment: reformation (or rehabilitation), incapacitation, retribution, and deterrence. The criminal justice system is unmistakably a system of slavery and involuntary servitude.

Attitudes held about people convicted of crime result from person-centered or reformist approaches (Miller, et al., 2015; Stahler, et al., 2013) that are closely linked to justifications given for the enslavement of people of color in the United States, specifically, religious, pseudo-scientific, and a white supremacist ideology (See Chapter 2). The reentry population is the same population subjected to mass incarceration. It seems, then, that discussions about the causes of crime, the social construction of the convicted as pathological, labeled as deviant and as “other,” frame this issue as well. I would argue that any policy approach seeking to address any aspect of the justice system, including the problem of reentry, that fails to reference and include in its analysis mention of the 13th Amendment and a call to challenge it as it currently stands is not worthy of serious consideration.

I am compelled to highlight this connections and encourage efforts to reframe discussions around justice matters and viewpoints related to the social problem of reentry with the 13th Amendment as part of the historical foci. Using the 13th Amendment as a starting point, policy

discussions must begin with the agreement that the US prison system is a slave-based system according to the US Constitution irrespective of arguments to the contrary and that it is a tool of state sanctioned punishment. Any honest analysis would draw attention to and question the use of private prisons. It seems necessary to ask whether private prisons that compete for a share of the prison market are in the best interest of taxpayers, the government, and those housed there or whether, like slavery, they have been established to profit off of mainly Black and Brown bodies.

Program Design: Revisit The Freedman Reentry Program Model

The limitations of traditional reentry program models based on recidivism reduction as the indicator of success have been documented (See Chapter 2). The bulk of existing re-entry programs seek to secure basic material needs post-prison. Although the Black men in this study have achieved elements of material, social and psychological success and confirm the value of existing programs, no one program is designed to address their material, social, and psychological needs. This research suggests that the needs of long-termers may differ from those spending relatively short periods in prison. The need for skill development and employment assistance is likely to vary by variations of time spent in prison. Long stays in prison also lessen the likelihood that family supports and family systems are in place at release. Moreover, long-termers are likely to feel disoriented, insecure, and anxiety when released. As a result their needs included additional efforts to help with adjustments and adapting.

In summary, the limitations of current program designs suggest a need for transitional services after-prison to facilitate job training and job placement and in some cases housing (a material component). They also suggest the need for peer supports, mentoring and groups; life skills curriculum development and training particularly relevant for men entering prison at a young age (social component). Finally, there is a need for a program component designed to

address the trauma of the incarceration experience, culture shock when exiting, and other aspects related to psychological adjustment, particularly for long-termers.

While it is agreed that the variables of success have not consistently been identified, there is a comprehensive “reentry” program model that has worked in the past, has promise, and is worthy of emulating, namely that designed by the Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees.

Reentry is a social problem of vast dimensions that requires an equally ambitious program and policy approach. An estimated 700,000 men and women return to hard-pressed communities every year; an estimated seven million in the next decade. The Freedmen’s Bureau’s approach is proposed as a strategy to facilitate the transition from prison – our contemporary slave system – of people incarcerated in jail or prison so that they may fit-into the social fabric as full citizens. Although the 13th Amendment sought to abolish slavery, it did not include provisions to insure that the newly freed became citizens. I have already observed that contemporary punishment policies were not forward-looking or took in consideration consequences of those changes that resulted from the unprecedented rise in the number of people under correctional supervision. As a result of the collateral consequences of incarceration many loose de facto their citizenship by virtue of their losing their right to vote. I have already argued that the right to vote is integral to one’s sense of citizenship and collective identity and that any denial of that right is universally recognized as a human rights violation (Purtle, 2013; also see Chapter 2). When denied the right to vote at any juncture formerly incarcerated people are likely to feel that they will never be accepted as full citizens, and that reintegration is less likely to be complete (Dawson-Edwards, 2008; Miller & Spillane, 2012). Fortunately, in New York State the right to vote is automatically restored following the completion of one’s sentence. However,

there seems no valid reason for suspending the right at any time despite an encounter with the justice system.

It should be noted that the Freedmen's Bureau approach is not framed as an intervention "concerned with ending" reentry or "keeping the problem from manifesting itself in the future" (Cummins, Byers, & Pedrick, 2011, p. 236). So long as we have prisons, people will always leave them and reenter society. The volume of people returning from prison at the root of today's reentry problem is related to incarceration rates. Incarceration rates are related to crime policies (See Chapter 2). Instead, the Freedmen's Bureau policy is proposed as a model that is intended to counter the many social barriers, collateral consequences, and invisible punishments that attach as a result of a conviction and sentence post-release and that make fitting in difficult (Pew Center on the States, 2011; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002). Reentry is often made more difficult by barriers to integration including access to public housing facilities, employment barriers, denial of the franchise, access to higher education and others that inhibit access to resources and the marketplace. In 2011, it was estimated that 65 million Americans between the age of 18 and 65 may have a criminal record (Rodriguez & Emsellem, 2011); in 2015, the Brennan Center for Justice reported that the number was reaching nearly 80 million (Friedman, 2015). As this number continues to grow, greater efforts are needed to insure that collateral consequences and invisible punishments that frustrate success are removed. Finally, this proposal fits well with social work values and the person-in-environment approach. Social workers' ethical responsibilities to the broader society includes values suggesting concern for individual welfare while simultaneously working to insure that social systems are predicated upon social justice themes. An individual's wellbeing is integral to the welfare of the society. In an ideal situation, one is not wholly possible without the other.

Appendix

Appendix A: Prevalence of symptoms of mental disorders among prison and jail inmates

Symptoms in past 12 months or since admission	Percent of inmates in-		
	State prison	Federal prison	Local Jail
Major or depressive of mania symptoms			
Persistent sad, numb or empty mood	32.9	23.7	39.6
Loss of interest or pleasure in activities	35.4	30.8	36.4
Increased or decreased appetite	32.4	25.1	42.8
Insomnia or hypersomnia	39.8	32.8	49.2
Psychological agitation or retardation	39.6	31.4	46.2
Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt	35.0	25.3	43.0
Diminished ability to concentrate or think	28.4	21.3	34.1
Ever attempted suicide	13.0	6.0	12.9
Persistent anger or irritability	37.8	30.5	49.4
Increased/decreased interest in sexual activities	34.4	29.0	29.5
Psychotic disorder symptoms			
Delusions	11.8	7.8	17.5
Hallucinations	7.9	4.8	13.7
Number of positive responses	Percent of inmates in-		
	State prison	Federal prison	Local Jail
Major depressive disorder symptoms			
0	29.5	38.8	22.8
1-2	26.1	27.9	23.8
3-4	20.5	17.1	2.30
5 or more	23.9	16.2	30.4
Mania disorder symptoms			
0	27.3	35.6	22.5
1	21.5	23.3	17.0
2	20.5	17.7	20.1
3	17.7	14.0	22.0
4	13.1	9.4	18.4
Psychotic disorder symptoms			
0	54.6	89.8	76.0
1	11.1	7.8	16.8
2	4.2	2.4	7.02

Note: Adopted from James, D. J., & Glaze, L. E. (2006). *Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. p. 2

Appendix B: Standard Conditions of Parole

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (2013) outlines typical conditions of release for those granted parole that include:

1. I will proceed directly to the area to which I have been released and, within twenty-four hours of my release, make my arrival report to that office of the Division of Parole unless other instructions are designated on my release agreement.
2. I will make office and/or written reports as directed.
3. I will not leave the State of New York or any other state to which I am released or transferred, or any area defined in writing by my Parole Officer without permission.
4. I will permit my Parole Officer to visit me at my residence and/or place of employment and I will permit the search and inspection of my person, residence, and property. I will discuss any proposed changes in my residence, employment, or program status with my Parole Officer. I understand that I have an immediate and continuing duty to notify my Parole Officer of any changes in my residence, employment, or program status when circumstances beyond my control make prior discussion impossible.
5. I will reply promptly, fully, and truthfully to any inquiry of, or communication by, my Parole Officer or other representative of the Division of Parole.
6. I will notify my Parole Officer immediately any time I am in contact with, or arrested by, any law enforcement agency. I understand that I have a continuing duty to notify my Parole Officer of such contact or arrest.
7. I will not be in the company of, or fraternize with any person I know to have a criminal record or whom I know to have been adjudicated a Youthful Offender, except for

accidental encounters in public places, work, school, or in any other instance with the permission of my Parole Officer.

8. I will not behave in such manner as to violate the provisions of any law to which I am subject, which provides for a penalty of imprisonment, nor will my behavior threaten the safety or well-being of myself or others.
9. I will not own, possess, or purchase any shotgun, rifle, or firearm of any type without the written permission of my Parole Officer. I will not own, possess, or purchase any deadly weapon as defined in the Penal Law or any dangerous knife, dirk, razor, stiletto, or imitation pistol. In addition, I will not own, possess or purchase any instrument readily capable of causing physical injury without a satisfactory explanation for ownership, possession or purchase.
10. In the event that I leave the jurisdiction of the State of New York, I hereby waive my right to resist extradition to the State of New York from any state in the Union and from any territory or country outside the United States. This waiver shall be in full force and effect until I am discharged from Parole or Conditional Release. I fully understand that I have the right under the Constitution of the United States and under law to contest any effort to extradite me from another state and return me to New York, and I freely and knowingly waive this right as a condition of my Parole or Conditional Release.
11. I will not use or possess any drug paraphernalia or use or possess any controlled substance without proper medical authorization.
12. Special Conditions: (as specified by the Board of Parole, Parole Officer or other authorized representative).

13. I will fully comply with the instructions of my Parole Officer and obey such special additional written conditions as he/she, a member of the Board of Parole, or an authorized representative of the Division of Parole, may impose.

Appendix C: Email Script

Greetings:

My name is Mikail DeVeaux and I am a doctoral student at the Graduate Center of CUNY and The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to aid me in my research designed to understand the experiences of African American men who have been incarcerated by agreeing to an interview or by asking a person who meets the criteria of this research who may be willing to talk about his experiences to contact me. They must have completed their sentences and have been out of prison for at least three years. Participation is completely voluntary and the context of our interview will be kept confidential.

If you are interested, and wish to determine if you are eligible to participate, please send me an email expressing your interest or give me a call at 347.626.7233, ext. 1. If you have any additional questions or need additional information before participating, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your help.

Appendix D: Introductory Script

This study and interview is being conducted so that I might learn how formerly incarcerated people think about their post-prison experiences. It is particularly important for my research that those who have been in prison tell their point of view about their experiences, including how their prison experience might be relevant, if at all, to what they experienced after release. I have asked for your help because only you can provide that information.

To facilitate my note taking I would like to audio tape our conversation. Before doing so, please review the consent form regarding the study. For your information, only my committee chair and I will have access to these recordings. Essentially the consent form says the information learned from this interview will be kept confidential, that your participation is voluntary, and that I will stop any time you feel uncomfortable or do not wish to continue.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than two hours. You have been selected to speak with me because you have met the criteria for participation and you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the post-prison experience.

A. *success* Post-Prison

Main Question:

I am hoping to learn about what it means to achieve success after having spent a number of years in prison. Of course, success means different things to different people. So, from your point of view, what does it mean to be “successful” after prison?

Probes:

What are some of the things that success after prison would include?

Why do you think these are important?

Would you say that any of these is the *most* important?

Tell me more about why you singled out: (Probes below will only be used if interviewee raises these issues.)

1. Employment
2. Education
3. Relationships with own children, family
4. Friendship, Intimate Relationships
5. Nice things like car, clothes, nice place to live (as in better than basic)
6. Health
7. Religion/Spirituality
8. Stuff going on in prison (this could include formal and informal programs, violence, solitary confinement, etc.).
9. Other:

B. Experiences in the Pursuit of Post-Release Success

Main Question:

Thanks, that was very helpful. I know it's been awhile since you have been home, tell me what you remember about those first couple of years?

- What was most frustrating?
- What were you most afraid of?
- What was easier or more rewarding than you expected?
- Can you describe what it was you were feeling emotionally during those early years?

Since those first couple of years, what has been difficult for you, what have you struggled with or continue to struggle with since you have been home?

So, based on what **you** have just said success after prison is, tell me about the experiences you have had, especially the ones that stand out for you since coming home/leaving, that are connected to what it is you wanted to achieve.

Probe:

Tell about how you got where you are.

What were some of the things you found helpful that were there for you along the way?

What kind of help or what are some of the things you wished were available for you along the way?

Tell me how they would have made a difference.

Why do you think those things are important?

C. The In-prison Experiences and the Achievement of Success

Let's shift gears for a minute . . . tell me about prison as you remember it . . . Describe for me what stands out for you when you were in prison, what experiences stand out even today . . . the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Main Question:

How did being in prison help or prevent you from being successful today based on what success means to you? Alternative: what affect did your prison experience have on your efforts to be successful after your release? (This question will give respondent an additional opportunity to reflect on, clarify, or add to previous statements about success.)

Probes:

Describe for me how what was going on in prison might have helped you accomplish your goals or achieve success after release. Maybe what was going on wasn't so helpful. Tell about

any connections you see between your prison experience and where you are now. (Probes below will only be used if interviewee raises these issues.)

- Prison job
- Education in prison
- Relationships with own children, family during incarceration
- Friendship (inside or outside of prison), Intimate Relationships in while in prison
- Religion/Spirituality
- Stuff going on in prison (this could include formal and informal programs, violence, solitary confinement, etc.).

Why was having these things during your incarceration important? What difference did they make?

What was it that you would have liked to have had while in prison that you think would have helped you achieve some of your goals?

Why do you think these things would have been important? What difference would they have made for you?

Would you say that any of these is the *most* important?

Why did you single that out?

D. Understanding and Achieving well-being

Let's shift gears one more time. What does being out of prison for at least three years mean to you? I am asking this because the system says that saying out of prison three years is a mark of success. Do you think "three" is a meaningful number? Anything?

Main Question:

At this point in your life, after all you have been through, can you describe how you are feeling about your life; about yourself right now . . . today?, Take a minute to think about that.

Probe:

Do you feel that things in your life are going well or that the things you are doing are worthwhile, meaningful? How so? Why?

How happy, satisfied, content, or good do you feel about:

- Your life?
- Yourself?
- Employment?
- Education?
- Relationships with own children, family?
- Friendship, intimate relationships?
- Nice things like car, clothes, nice place to live (as in better than basic)?
- Health?
- Religion/Spirituality?

Overall, would you say you are doing OK—happy content, doing fine?

One last thing, I see you managed to stay out and do some things....what's the difference between you and all those guys you know who have gone back to prison one, two maybe three times . . . what can you tell me about why you haven't gone back to prison like the rest of them?

E. Post interview comments (Demographic questionnaire).

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

Wanting More than Just Staying Out: Reflections of New York City Black Men Post- Prison Release

Demographic Questionnaire

As part of this research, I am collecting summary information about those participating in the study. This form will be kept confidential and will not be viewed or forwarded to any individual or agency not connected with this study. Do not include your name on this form.

Questions	Years	Months
Current age		
Age at incarceration		
Age at release		
Length of time incarcerated		
Length of time since release from prison		
Length of time in community supervision (on parole)		
Length of time since completion of sentence		
Type of crime convicted related to their incarceration		
How would you describe yourself in terms of religion or spirituality?		

Appendix F: Coding Categories

1. Success

Physical/Medical Health

Drug free

Well-being

Overcoming stigma

Achieving spiritual or religious wellbeing/relationship with supreme being/balance

Self- worth restored/humanity restored

New self (reinvention)

Current State of Well-Being

Okay

Autonomy and well-being

Linked with intimate relationship

Relationships and Social Support

Love (intimate relationship/marriage)

Community integration

Family reintegration

Community and Civic

Giving back/helping other in and out of prison

Tangible Symbols of Success

2. Current Experience

Emotional issues

Mental issues

Social supports

Employment

Housing

Entitlements

Support network

3. Experience in prison

Education

Religion

Violence

Therapeutic Programs

Appendix G: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



Human Research Protections Program
Hunter College (CUNY) HRPP Office

DATE: August 7, 2014

TO: Mika'il DeVeaux, MPS, MA, MPhil
FROM: Hunter College (CUNY) HRPP Office

PROJECT TITLE: [566489-3] (Dissertation) Wanting More Than Just Staying Out of Prison: Reflections of New York City Black Men Post-Prison Release

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: August 7, 2014

EXPIRATION DATE: June 27, 2015

RISK LEVEL: Minimal Risk

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 6,7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University Integrated IRB has APPROVED the following revisions: 1) *change of the project title to indicate that this is no longer a pilot study*; 2) *the increase in sample size to 10-15 subjects*; 3) *the removal of the use of the debriefing script previously used during the pilot study*; 4) *the revision of the advertisement (email script) to correct grammatical errors*; 5) *the addition of the demographic questionnaire to collect additional data*; 6) *the revision of corresponding documents to reflect the previously mentioned changes to your research*. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and assurance of the participant's understanding, followed by a signed consent form(s). Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any modifications/changes to the approved materials must be **approved by this IRB prior to implementation**. Please use the appropriate modification submission form for this request.

All **UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS (UPS)** involving risks to subjects or others, **NON-COMPLIANCE** issues, and **SUBJECT COMPLAINTS** must be reported promptly to this office. All sponsor reporting requirements must also be followed. Please use the appropriate submission form for this report.

This research **must receive continuing review and final IRB approval** before the expiration date of June 27, 2015. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for the IRB to conduct its review and obtain final IRB approval by that expiration date. Please use the appropriate continuation submission forms for this procedure. PLEASE NOTE: The regulations do **not** allow for any grace period or extension of approvals.

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