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Perceptions of the Reentry Process Among African American Male Ex-Offenders with Multiple Incarcerations

Chanae Latrice Lumpkin
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College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Perceptions of the Reentry Process Among African American Male Ex-Offenders
with Multiple Incarcerations

by

Chanae Lumpkin

MS, Troy University, 2007

BS, Troy State University, 2004

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Social Work & Human Services

Walden University

August 2020

Abstract

Within 3 years of their release from the criminal justice system, almost 7 out of 10 released African American males go back to. There is limited social science research into how these ex-offenders perceive their lived experiences after release. The research questions that guided this inquiry related to understanding the post-prison experiences of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations. The conceptual framework was guided by Tajfel's social identity theory and Becker's social reaction theory. Interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of 6 African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations who had been released from prison 3 years or longer. Data were collected from interviews along with examining records and analyzed by coding and concept mapping using a phenomenological approach. Data analysis identified 10 emergent themes that represented participants' attitudes, experiences, beliefs and perceptions. Understanding the experiences of these ex-offenders should contribute to positive social change by providing knowledge to criminal justice practitioners to assist in creating policies to meet the needs of this population by means of reentry, legal, vocational, and social services. Findings from this study could also provide valuable insights on reentry and intervention services for recently released individuals to help in their reintegration experiences.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to, and give thanks and glory to God for, His goodness, mercy, grace and faithfulness to me during this long journey. I dedicate this study in loving memory of my loved ones and my best friend who have crossed over to the Lord's heavenly paradise, Lizzie Mae Lumpkin, Amanda Hoffman, Leon Lumpkin, Thelma Lumpkin-Craft, Kyle Braxton, Benjamin Walker, James Lumpkin, Mary Walker and Kimberly Woods. Each of you instilled the importance of faith, prayer and hard work in me during some of the most pivotal years of my life. Your encouragement, support, advice and unconditional love molded my life tremendously. Although you are not here with me in the natural, I know that you are with me in spirit. There are no words to express how much I love and miss each of you!

To my parents, Carolyn and Marvin, whose love for me and belief in me is infinite. Thank you for sharing with me your love for and devotion to God at an early age. Mommy you have always drilled in me the importance of an education and the dignity of hard work. You are exemplary of what it means to set the bar high. During one of the most challenging times in your life, I witnessed you fight through one medical complication after another and you did so with a spirit of never giving up, never complaining and always being grateful. You preserved through the challenge with the grace and pose of a heavenly angel and you are such an inspiration. Thank you for your undying love, your support, your wisdom, your strength, your kindness, your comfort, your belief in my dreams and your gift of giving that has shaped me into the woman that I am today. I will never forget your advice to strive for greatness, no matter what life

throws at me. Thank you, Mommy, I love and adore you so much. Love always your daughter.

To my sisters, Kianna and Lakasha, my loving aunts, uncles and cousins for there are too many to name but each of you know who you are and how special you are to me, thank you for your radiant love and unfailing support through the years. Each of you have been with me since the beginning of my educational journey. Your unconditional love and encouragement have empowered me throughout the years to complete this doctorate. Thank you for understanding when I was missing time with family and dedicated to my educational pursuits and career. Your love, patience and support will never be forgotten. To my nephew, Jaterius I want you to always remember that hard work, determination and a full reliance upon the Grace of God will allow you the opportunity to pursue and accomplish all of your goals. I love each of you with all my heart!

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Amen!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Ineffective prisoner reentry, the transition from incarceration to free society (Lerch, Viglione, Eley, James-Andrews, & Taxman, 2011), has become a major social problem in the United States as offenders are released each day. In the United States, there are more than 700,000 individuals (or 1,700 a day) leaving state and federal prisons each year with another 9 million released from local jails (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2016). Of those released, 67.8% are at risk of being arrested within 3 years of release (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). At the end of 2015, state and federal correctional authorities had jurisdiction over 1,612,395 inmates in the U.S. prison system (BJS, 2016).

The Bureau of Justice reported that over 561,400 of those incarcerated in the U.S. prisons were African American males (BJS, 2016). Carson and Golinelli (2013) noted that African American male offenders comprise a growing population in the U.S. correctional programs. In 2015, Black non-Hispanic males had an imprisonment rate (3,074 per 100,000 U.S. Black residents) that was nearly seven times higher than White non-Hispanic males (459 per 100,000) (BJS, 2016). Carson (2014) stated that approximately 50% of incarcerated individuals in jails and prisons are African American men. The high incidence of imprisonment of the last 2 decades has led to an increasing number of adults being released from prison (Carson & Golinelli, 2013).

Many newly released offenders experience disappointments, barriers, and the high probability of returning to prison, in what is referred to as *recidivism* (Gideon & Hung-En

Sung, 2010). When African American male ex-offenders return to society, a number of them experience dismissal from their families and friends; rejection from potential landlords; and intensive background screening, specifically when it comes to obtaining employment and public housing (Gideon & Hung-En Sung, 2010). An individual returning to the community after a period of multiple incarcerations faces many hardships (Garland, Wodahl, & Schuhmann, 2013). They emerge from prison with many post-release reintegration challenges. Post-release reintegration challenges include needing to find new housing and employment; establishing new skills or being confronted with unfamiliar technology; attempting to change old, negative patterns of behavior; transitioning from a highly structured and socially ordered setting to a more autonomous and ambiguous one. Newly released offenders are also faced with attempting to make sense of old relationships or attempting to create new positive social connections in their attempt to reintegrate into society (Liem & Sampson, 2016). For the individual released from incarceration all of these challenges can occur simultaneously (Visher & Travis, 2011). In addition, there is a great deal of difficulty assessing substance abuse and health care (Crow & Smykla, 2013). Correctional professionals are confronted with trying to provide prisoners with reentry services to navigate the transition from prison to community (Visher & Travis, 2011). Recidivism results in a public safety concern as well as a community concern (Liem & Sampson 2016).

Finding permanent employment is perhaps the most common obstacle for many African American male ex-offenders returning to society (Tomar, 2013). Two of the biggest challenges African American male ex-offenders face while trying to obtain steady

employment are the stigma of criminal conviction and the possible erosion of job skills and social ties to those who could provide employment opportunities (Carson, 2014). Because of the difficulty finding ongoing work, many African-American ex-offenders experience ongoing homelessness that requires them to live with relatives, in shelters, or on the streets (Moore, Stuewig, & Tangney 2013). On top of finding employment, finding a place to live is another thing on an ex-offender's to-do list once they are released from prison (Moore, Stuewig, & Tangney 2013).

Finding shelter can be difficult if an ex-offender does not know where to stay and a history of incarceration can limit one's ability to secure long-term housing (Garland, Wodahl, & Schuhmann, 2013). Once out of prison, African American male ex-offenders are most likely going to return to communities that are severely impoverished. Carson (2014) describes these communities as marked by high rates of poverty, unemployment, low educational achievement, low homeownership, and high rates of single-parent households. The experiences that African-American men face are made even more complex by stigma and subsequent discrimination (Opsal, 2012). There is a clear stigma attached to being incarcerated and most people cannot look past that stigma to see the real people trying to make something better out of their lives (Opsal, 2012). African American male ex-offenders face many risks and problems that could lead them back to jail shortly after they are released. Not surprisingly then, the most recidivism occurs during the first 3 years after release (Carson, 2014).

Carson (2014) found that reentry into mainstream society carries the possibility for intense negative consequences for prisoners, their families, and communities. Despite

the fact that correctional costs have increased from approximately \$9 billion to \$60 billion during the past 2 decades, prisoners are no more prepared for reentry into society than in the past. In fact, those figures include only a small share of prisoners receiving educational and substance abuse treatment (Carson, 2014). The new figures suggest that despite the 324% increase in corrections spending, in many states there has been little improvement in the performance of corrections systems (Pew Center for the States, 2012).

While researchers across disciplines have explored the reentry experiences of ex-offenders, limited social science literature exists concerning the post-prison experiences of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations, from their viewpoint, years after their release (Crow & Smykla, 2013). This is a problem because these individuals who are highly represented statistically have not been able to tell their stories and experiences (Tomar, 2013). The general problem is that African-American ex-offenders have been unable to lend their voice to address the concerns regarding their perspectives on their post-prison experiences in order to develop a possible effective response to the reentry process (Wang, Hay, Todak & Bales, 2014). There is a gap in the literature on the lack of understanding about the economic, emotional and social needs of African American male ex-offenders after their release from prison, and how the stigma/shame they are faced with affects their lives (Wang, Hay, Todak & Bales, 2014). This study was designed to understand the emotional, economic, and social needs from the perspectives of African American male ex-offenders that are exposed to post-release

reintegration challenges (i.e., stigma and shame) and whether these challenges have driven their history of multiple incarcerations (Garland, Wodah, & Schuhmann, 2013).

Background of the Problem

When analyzing the incarceration rates by demographics, it becomes clear that African American males are represented at a disproportionately high level (Weatherspoon, 2014). In addition to the aforementioned recidivism, African American males also face a higher risk of incarceration. African American men are 6 times more likely to be incarcerated compared to White men and 2.5 times more likely as compared to Hispanic men (Durose et al. 2014). Carson (2014) reported that at any given time, 1 in 10 African American males in their 30s is at risk for incarceration (whether prison or jail). Compared to 1 in 17 for White men, 1 in 3 African American men face a lifetime likelihood of imprisonment (Carson & Golinelli, 2013).

On any given day one in every three African American males between the ages of 20 and 29 is in prison or jail or on probation or parole (BJS, 2016). In 2016, 1 in 15 adult African American males was in prison or jail on any given day (BJS, 2016). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, African American men constitute the highest rate of imprisonment compared to all ethnicities (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). Finally, for every African American male who graduates from college, 100 African American males are arrested (Carson, 2014).

There has been a significant increase in the prison population in the United States over the past 40 years. From 1972 to 2012, the prison population grew from 196,000 people to over 1.5 million people or 1 in every 100 adults being under state and federal

correctional authorities' jurisdiction within the prisons of the United States (Carson & Golinelli, 2013). A report released by the United States Department of Justice indicated that the correctional population reached a new high in 1998 and reflected an increase of more than 650% (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014). The BJS also reported that over 561,400 of those incarcerated in the U.S. prisons were African American males (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011).

As a consequence of the incarceration experience, African American male ex-offenders emerge from prison with many emotional and practical challenges in their attempt to reintegrate into society (Moore, Stuewig, & Tangney, 2013; Tomar, 2013; Wang, Hay, Todak, & Bales, 2014). According to Garland, Wodahl, & Schuhmann (2013), housing is often an issue because many landlords refuse to rent to former inmates due to their fears of community safety. The inability to obtain housing results in the homelessness of many formerly incarcerated individuals (Harding, Wyse, Dobson, & Morenoff, 2014).

Discriminatory factors associated with employment also is a challenge for ex-offenders. Garland et al. (2013) concluded that many employers refuse to employ ex-offenders when it is revealed that they were once imprisoned. The issue of trust and the fear of future criminal acts were the reasons the employers gave for not hiring persons with criminal records (Garland et al., 2013). The reintegration experiences of ex-prisoners can also be affected by the identities acquired during the incarceration period (Boduszek, Adamson, Shevlin, Hyland, & Bourke, 2013). Some inmates adopt the social

identities of the *ex-convict* label and are unable to shake these identities after their release from prison (LeBel, 2012).

LeBel (2012) pointed out that individuals who keep the identities they adopted during their incarceration are frequently subjected to external and internal limits. These self-imposed limits create reintegrating difficulties. For example, associating with negative groups who are notorious for their social prison identities are external limits that some ex-inmates place on themselves. Meanwhile, positive beliefs and motivations are internal factors that correlate with the constructive experiences of formerly incarcerated persons (LeBel, 2012). Some former prisoners can manage the identities associated with being incarcerated. Opsal (2012) analyzed semistructured interviews of female ex-offenders to provide insight into how former inmates used positive self-concepts, and confronting the stigma of being labeled a deviant, as coping tools in their post-prison management. According to Opsal (2012), former inmates who managed the prison identities, and the stigma of being labeled an ex-convict, had an easier time coping with reentry barriers. These former inmates were also able to reconstruct and replace negative identities and were less likely to reoffend.

Problem Statement

Ex-offenders face many obstacles to a successful reentry or transition from jail or prison to life in the community (Petersilia & Reitz, 2012). The reentry period, however, offers many challenges for returning ex-offenders to reintegrate, which may include; obtaining housing, securing employment, receiving treatment for substance abuse/mental health problems, and complying with conditions of parole supervision (Liem & Sampson,

2016). According to Visser and Travis (2011), an individual's experience when transitioning and returning home to their families and communities is a fundamentally dynamic, social process. The U.S. Department of Corrections and community leaders have come to understand that once offenders have served their sentences, their ability to transition successfully back into society as law-abiding citizens is in the interest of public safety (Carson & Golinelli, 2013).

The U.S. Department of Justice (2011a) has tried to answer the safety concerns of the community by requesting correctional administrators to make adjustments to their reentry programs. These adjustments can address the perceived risk factors and individual unmet needs of inmates through educational programs, substance abuse programs, and cognitive behavioral therapy (BJS, 2011a). Most ex-offenders encounter economical, emotional and social issues that make it difficult for them to successfully reintegrate back into society (Elam, 2011).

Much of the research that has been conducted on the reentry process has a quantitative focus, which has been used to determine the relationships between identifiable variables (Crow & Smykla, 2013). Despite multiple years of research on prisoner reentry and innovative policies and programs, there is a need to increase understanding of successful reentry experiences through the lens of the ex-offender, specifically African-American males with a history of multiple incarcerations (Denney, Tweksbury, & Jones, 2014). There is not enough literature on how these individuals perceive their own lives from a phenomenological perspective. Thus, there is a need to understand first-hand accounts of their lived experiences (Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson,

& Gordon, 2016; Morenoff & Harding, 2014; Crow & Smykla, 2013; Davis Bahr & Ward, 2012).

There is a gap in the aforementioned literature regarding the lack of understanding about the economical, emotional and social needs of African American male ex-offenders after their release from prison, and how the stigma/shame they are faced with affects their lives as they reintegrate back into society (Wang, Hay, Todak & Bales, 2014). The qualitative study was designed to understand the emotional, economic and social needs from the perspectives of African American male ex-offenders who are exposed to post-release reintegration challenges (e.g., stigma and shame) and if these challenges drive their history of multiple incarcerations (Garland, Wodah, & Schuhmann, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover and understand the post-prison experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have had a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegration into society after being released from prison within the previous 3-5 years.

Research Question

1. What are the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process the transition from prison back into the community?
2. What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economic, emotional and social adjustments after release from prison, and the ability to reintegrate back into society?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was built on the concepts of stigma and labeling. Specifically, *stigma* as understood from Tajfel's (1982) social identity theory (SIT), and Becker's (1963) social representations theory (SRT), also referred to as *labeling*, were the theoretical frameworks guiding the study. The effect of stigma on important life domains and the behavior, health, feelings, and thoughts of individuals can be understood from the theoretical framework of SIT (Hogg, 2006). Tajfel postulated that to comprehend the social environment and build self-esteem, the normal cognitive process of humans is to place individuals into groups. The assumption of SIT is that when individuals identify with certain social categories or groups, they often take on the personality and behaviors of the groups based on the significance and emotional attachment they place on the groups or categories (Hogg, 2006; Tajfel, 1982).

SRT (labeling) portrays individuals that possess criminal backgrounds with identities that are negative (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Labels such as *ex-offender* can lead to depression, loss of self-esteem, stereotyping, devaluation, rejection, and discrimination. The essence of labeling is the strong reaction placed on individuals in being labeled a criminal, and the negative effect on a person's self-concept (Becker, 1963). Murphy, Fuleihan, Richard, and Jones (2011) proposed that the concept of labeling is not centered on an act, but on society's reaction to individuals and the subsequent effects of the labeling on them.

The theories of social identity and social reaction are deemed more appropriate for this study because they relate to the experiences of African American ex-offenders

found in current research (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; Moore, Stuewig, & Tangney, 2013; Morris & Piquero, 2013). Therefore, they were considered more applicable to the experiences of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. The conceptual framework of stigma and labeling, within the theories of social identity and social reaction, supported this by providing a lens to analyze the research questions and to explore the lived experiences of African American males who reintegrate back into society after release from prison.

Detailed information regarding the conceptual framework of stigma and labeling, as defined in the theories of social identity (Tajfel, 1982) and social reaction (Becker, 1963), are presented in the review of the literature. Accounts of those navigating the reentry process, as expressed by the participants, may help produce better outcomes for African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. The theories of social identity and social reaction are more fully discussed in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In order to gain insight into the dynamics of prisoner reentry, I explored post-prison adjustment from the perspective of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations: how they perceive it, feel about it, make sense of it, describe it, talk with others about it and interpret it in order to capture the lived experience as opposed to a second-hand experience (Wertz, Charmaz, McCullen, & Josselson, 2011). Therefore, a phenomenological methodology was used to provide an in-

depth investigation of African American male ex-offender's with a history of multiple incarcerations lived experiences. Moustakas (1994, p. 27) described a phenomenological study as one that focuses on how individuals make sense of "what they have experienced" and "how they have experienced it" in an effort to make known to the researcher or audience the themes and topics that are significant to the areas of inquiry, and then the participant's own themes and topics are expounded.

In-depth, one-on-one interviews were used to gather rich, critical, and descriptive data from a sample of six participants. Interviews were conducted in order to understand the experience of reentry among a group of formerly incarcerated African American men with a history of multiple incarcerations, the challenges they face post-release, the strategies they use to rejoin society successfully, the motivators needed to abstain from crime, as well as capturing the meaning of their lived experiences. In this way, the researcher and participant engaged in a collaborative dialogue to promote self-exploration and understanding of the lived experience (Vagle, 2014). Based on the tenets of qualitative data, the interviewing process emphasized the reconstruction of social events from the participant's subjective interpretation as accurately as possible (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Furthermore, the participants were seen as the experts who could rewrite their lives (Patton, 2014).

To identify participants, I utilized purposive criterion sampling of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations: All participants individuals had to have some knowledge of reentry. They had to be English speaking, have served more than 1 year in a southern state or federal prison, have committed felony

offenses in South Carolina, and have been released within the past 3-5 years. (Robinson, 2014). The sample of six participants enabled the researcher to gather descriptive information from a variety of different African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations who represent this special population in an attempt to access the realities of the reentry process and reduce experiences to a description of the universal essence (Patton, 2014). A more detailed discussion of methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

Terminology is essential for understanding operational terms used for a study. In order to understand key terms within this study, definitions ensured vague or interchangeable words are clearly identified. Regarding the phenomenon of prisoner reentry, the research study used the following terminology to explain concepts and perspectives (Clear, Reisig, & Cole, 2015).

African American male ex-offender refers to a male inmate of African American descent who has been released from prison after completing his criminal sentence (Alexander, 2012).

Assessment refers to the evaluation of appraisal of an individual's suitability for placement in a specific treatment module (Gaskew, 2014).

Criminal behavior refers to intentional behavior that violates a criminal code (Clear, Reisig, & Cole, 2015).

Criminal justice practitioner refers to correctional practitioners (i.e., case managers, social workers, probation/parole officers and correctional officials) who assist offenders with specific needs (Joyce, 2013).

Criminogenic needs refer to the possible criminal elements of criminality that if not addressed can lead to potential criminal behaviors, the risks that lead to reoffending or recidivism (Clear, Reisig, & Cole, 2015).

Evidence-based practices refers to scientific measures that produce outcomes as intervening practices based on tradition, conceptual beliefs, or empirical evidence (Clear, Reisig, & Cole, 2015).

Ex-offender refers to a person who has been released from prison after completing his or her criminal sentence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012).

Felony offense refers to a serious crime (i.e., murder, robbery, burglary, rape, arson, escape from prison and so forth) characterized under federal and state statutes as any crime punishable by death or imprisonment in excess of one year in a state or federal prison (Bureau of Justice, Statistics, 2014).

Incarceration refers to the time an inmate or offender spends in jail or prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014).

Inmate, convict, offender, prisoner refers to the individual convicted of a crime who serves time in jail or prison (BJS, 2015).

Labeling theory refers to a theory that suggests that the criminal justice system creates career criminals by associating offenders with negative labels such as criminal, delinquent, or convict (Becker, 1963).

Lived experience refers to comprehensive understanding of an experience as perceived by a certain individual or group (Gaskew, 2014).

Multiple incarcerations, re-offender, recidivist refers to an individual who has a history of more than one arrest in the criminal justice system (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014).

Neighborhood effects refers to the effects imposed on individuals as a result of living in a specific neighborhood that the same individual (or household) would not experience if living in a different neighborhood (Alexander, 2012).

Parole refers to release from incarceration before the mandatory release date to community supervision (BJS, 2015).

Phenomenology refers to a descriptive methodology that seeks to illuminate the meaning of lived experience for an individual or an explicit group of human beings about a concept or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Post-prison refers to the time after release from prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014).

Primary risk factors refer to barriers that African American male ex-offenders encounter when reintegrating into society (Mears & Cochran, 2014).

Repeat offender refers to inmates incarcerated in prison past the first offense due to a parole violation or new offense (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015).

State prison refers to a correctional institution operated by each state government that incarcerates inmates who are sentenced to serve their sentence at these facilities for

violating state laws. In all states, state correctional institutions are under the direct responsibility of the governor of that particular state (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015).

Specific needs refer to offenders with special needs such as mental issues, substance abuse, chemical dependency, gender offenders, women, African American males, and juveniles. A population of offenders having complex issues to meet and assess (Mears & Cochran, 2014).

Stigma is the devalued social identity that groups or individuals ascribe to other persons or groups in society (Goffman, 1963).

Substance abuse treatment refers to a professional intervention in helping a chemically dependent user to obtain abstinence (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014). The immediate goals for such treatment are to reduce drug abuse, improve the individual's ability to function, as well as decrease medical and social complications of drug abuse and addiction.

Transitional housing refers to a facility that provides support services to ex-offenders who are attempting to transition back into society (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015).

Assumptions

Researchers using a qualitative approach typically begin the research process with certain personal beliefs or assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2014). Assumptions are the realistic expectations of a researcher, but that will not be tested when conducting research (Patton, 2014). First, it was assumed that using a qualitative phenomenological design would accurately capture the essence of reentry of

African American male ex-offenders' with a history of multiple incarcerations. Second, participants were assumed to be capable of understanding the interview questions. Third, interview questions were assumed to be sufficient enough to assess one's subjective experience. I assumed that all participants have experienced challenges associated with the process of reintegrating back into society after release from prison (Crow & Smykla, 2013). Furthermore, it was assumed that all African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations would be accurate and reliable sources for gathering information on prisoner reentry and would answer questions honestly and openly during the interview process.

In addition, I assumed that the open-ended interview questions would enable African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations to articulate their thoughts and experiences related to their post-prison lived experiences. This assumption is meaningful and critical to the study because the use of open-ended questions is an effective technique to elicit rich narrative data from participants. I also assumed that their responses provided emerging themes, concepts, and categories to reveal an understanding of the meaning of each participant's lived experiences. This assumption was meaningful because I assumed that the communicated responses would answer the research question in this study.

Furthermore, I assumed that participants were motivated by the desire to tell their stories, so the information they provided was accurate. I assumed that the transitional homes in a south-eastern region of the state would allow the researcher to provide updated empirical information about the lived experiences and challenges faced by this

special population of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations reintegrating into society.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was limited to African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations who were recently released from prison (3 years or longer) and transitioning back into society. Thus, I collected data for this study from a purposive sampling group of participants who were able to identify with post-prison lived experiences after serving time in prison. The participants engaged in open-ended interviews designed to elicit candid responses and produce in-depth descriptions about their post-prison lived experiences.

African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations who have been released 3 years or longer had a more realistic concept of their post-incarceration experiences after the conclusion of the proverbial honeymoon of their release. Furthermore, African American male ex-offenders who had been released less than 1 year might not have had enough time to comprehend, and be able to articulate, how the identities acquired during incarceration affected their reintegrating experiences.

Delimitations of this study included African American male offenders who have served time in prison (1 year or more) within the state of South Carolina. In this qualitative study, I focused on African American male offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations who continued to struggle with reentry issues after receiving a felony conviction and serving time in prison.

Limitations

The present phenomenological research study on African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations and prisoner reentry had several limitations. The results of this study are not intended to generalize to all African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. Another limitation of this study was it was limited to a small sample size consisting of six ex-offenders, who are residents of South Carolina. Using a small sample limited the transferability of the study's results. The sample size was small because the goal in phenomenological studies is not to make generalizations or inferences about the population being studied (Dworkin, 2012). Given that the population is from only one region, the findings from this study are not to generalize or transfer to all African American ex-offenders. The purpose of this qualitative study was not to determine generalizability or transferability, but to contribute to the literature towards gaining an understanding of the phenomenon, from the perspectives of the African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations, of their lived experiences, 3 years or longer after their prison release.

A third limitation was that this research was limited to a particular state with a specific program, one which may have a different effect in another part of the country. A fourth limitation of the study was my personal and professional relationship to the phenomenon which has the potential to lead to researcher bias. I have working knowledge of the phenomenon of the process of reentry in the criminal justice system and am of the same race as the sampled participants. Therefore, it was crucial that I took

notes during data collection and analysis so I could monitor my own thoughts and feelings (Creswell, 2012).

Further, despite the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviews, participants may not answer all the questions honestly which poses a limitation. In essence, participants may feel that they have something to risk. As an example, Alexander (2012) believed that the period spent in prison is particularly stressful without having to come home and relive and/or rehash (a) the loss of freedom, including separation from the family circle, friends; (b) loss of autonomy, being restricted due to probation; (c) loss of personal security, living with the continuous threat of physical aggression by others in the community. Moreover, it must be noted that interview responses were personal perceptions and not always reflective of the objective world. Finally, I understood that there was the potential for another salient limitation based on the participants' recollection of events or lived experiences during the reentry process.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may expand the current knowledge base and provide human resource practitioners with a deeper understanding of what it takes to provide African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations a chance to re-enter their communities and not re-offend. This increased understanding may help to improve the existing reentry programs with new curriculum and procedures and may open new venues of research.

As the number of offenders being released from U.S. federal and state prisons continues to grow, social science research is needed to explore the phenomenon of the

post-prison lived experiences of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations, from their perspectives, years after their release (Durose, Cooper, & Synder, 2014). Addressing the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after their release from prison and their ability to reintegrate back into society may promote positive social and policy implications by broadening the knowledge of the field of social services to better understand and accommodate the needs of African American males as they seek to cope with prisoner reentry and challenges of post-prison adjustment (Garland, Wodah, & Schuuhmann, 2013). The discriminatory practices of some individuals against African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations can also provide an awareness of the post-release experiences of this population. Findings from this study may help explain their behaviors and mental processes. Furthermore, findings from the present study could identify influences and aid policymakers about the factors that determine success and failure for African American male's with a history of multiple incarcerations in efforts to reduce the phenomenon known as recidivism (Davis, Bahr, & Ward, 2012).

Moreover, findings from this study may help explain the behaviors and mental processes associated with life after release from prison for African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. In addition, this phenomenological study could have compelling implications for justice and public safety, and could be included when policies regarding reentry transition and post-prison adjustment of African American male ex-offenders are being explored. Furthermore, findings from the present

study may promote positive social and policy implications by identifying influences and aiding policymakers when decisions on monetary compensation and social services designed to assist recently released individuals in their reintegration into society are being examined (Harding, Wyse, & Morenoff, 2014).

Summary

The lives of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations and their progress through the reentry process was explored in this qualitative phenomenological research study. The discussion in Chapter 1 provided the introduction to the study as well as a focus on the research problem that was addressed.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature related to this study. The historical, theoretical and empirical literature provides insight into (a) the different pathways, profiles, complex barriers facing offenders upon release and (b) the expanding need to provide services to this group of African American male ex-offenders.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed review of the research methodology and design utilized in the research. It includes how the participants are selected and the method of inquiry used to gather information.

Chapter 4 provides the data collection and analysis procedures for the study as well as the research findings.

Chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion of the results; implications for practice and future research; recommendations for policymakers, practitioners; and structures for procedures and practices to address the phenomenon of the reentry process experienced by these men.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The attitudes and views held by African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations influences their transition during the reentry process which could affect their failures and/or successes they experience after their release from prison (Crow & Smykla, 2013). Based on my review of the literature, there was little known about the lived experiences of this particular group of men. In this study, I sought to raise the awareness of legislators, practitioners, advocates, and community members about the meaning and reality of their experience through their subjective lenses.

In this chapter, I cover the following topics: the search strategies I used in conducting my searches, a synopsis of the literature establishing the relevance of the problem, a description of the theoretical framework including the rationale, an overview of the scholarly discussion of African American male ex-offenders encounters with the criminal justice system and how it impacted their reentry process.

Literature Search Strategy

I used numerous procedures to ensure that I conducted a thorough search of the literature. A search of current published, peer-reviewed articles and foundational works in studies on African American male reentry into society after incarceration in prison constitute a significant portion of the literature.

The following are keywords and phrases were used to access scholarly works relevant to this study: *African American male, African American men, black, attitudes, arrests, bias, black male, discrimination, perceptions, ex-offender, convict, ex-convict,*

prisoner, incarceration, mass incarceration, recidivism, reentry, rehabilitation, reintegration, reentry needs, perceptions, phenomenology, phenomenological studies, labeling theory, stigma, reoffending, post incarceration, post-prison, transition services, repeat offender, reentry program, transitional housing, qualitative, in-depth interview, recidivist and multiple incarcerations.

An evaluation of the articles to determine their relevance to this study revealed emerging patterns in search results and reference lists as outlined by renowned authors or researchers of the topic. A review of the literature did not provide any empirical studies. However, the review provided a better understanding of some of the causal factors associated with their reintegrating experiences. The literature search included the Walden University Library to examine dissertations, journals, law reviews in multiple disciplines, Thoreau multiple database, full-text and peer-reviewed articles.

I used the following databases to identify historical and contemporary peer-reviewed sources within the last 5 years: Criminal Justice Periodicals, Criminal Justice Database, Academic OneFile, Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, Lexis Nexis Academic, ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, SAGE Premier, SAGE Research Methods Online, Social Sciences Citation Index, SocINDEX with Full Text, SAGE Online Journals, EBSCOHost, SAGE Knowledge, and Expanded Academic ASAP. Keyword searches were set up in Google Scholar to receive alerts on newly published articles.

Conceptual Framework

Becker's (1963) Social Representations Theory (SRT) provides an understanding of the experiences of individuals after their release from prison in the social context of labeling. Becker framed the theory around the concept that social deviations result in the labeling of persons who are considered outsiders. Tajfel's (1982) Social Identity Theory (SIT) offers a framework for some of the post-prison experiences of individuals as it relates to the relationship between self, society, and stigma. According to Tajfel (1982), individuals are placed into groups by members of society, and some individuals identify and accept the identity of a categorized social group.

Social Representations Theory: Labeling

Becker (1963) developed the present acceptable approach to the concept of labeling, also referred to as Social Representations Theory (SRT). According to Becker, deviance is created by social groups in a society to establish social rules. When the rules are broken, the perpetrator, or the alleged perpetrator, is labeled a deviant. Although many labels applied to individuals are not accurate, once the label is conferred, individuals become a part of all the broad generalities that are applied to that label.

One of the significant contributions to the concept of labeling is that it places individuals in circumstances that make it difficult to continue the normal routine of everyday life (Becker, 1963). For example, persons who have been imprisoned find it difficult to obtain employment because of the label of being an ex-offender (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; D'Alessio, Stolzenberg, & Flexon, 2015). Dominant social groups in a society have the power to formulate social stigmatization into laws by implementing

various civil disenfranchisement against those they deem to be deviants (Murphy et al., 2011). As Murphy et al. stated, rights such as the right to vote, eligibility for housing, financial aid, and public assistance programs can be denied to individuals who are labeled deviants based on the laws created by certain social groups. Many state legislators refuse to provide assistance to ex-offenders who, in their views, were found guilty or plead guilty to a crime that they committed (O'Brien & Findley, 2014). Frequently, the reaction of this group is that those who are charged with crimes, even if later found innocent, are probably guilty of something (Pecker, 2013).

Grounds (2004) discussed that the social consequences of imprisonment and reentry difficulties are the same whether the individuals were wrongfully imprisoned, or guilty of the crimes for which they were incarcerated. As Murphy et al. (2011) stated, the postulation of SRT is that symbolic brands placed on individuals such as criminal and deviant are a consequence of the rules and sanctions imposed by persons in dominant groups. The dominant groups in a society institute the rules and members of the community judge the violation of these rules through the eyes of the rule makers and rule enforcers (Becker, 1963). According to Visser, Bakken, and Gunter (2013), the loss of social standing in the community, along with the hostility and fear exhibited by persons in the general community, are social barriers to the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into their communities.

Gunnison and Helfgott (2011) conducted a qualitative study to examine the perceptions of community corrections officers regarding the influence of the differing social backgrounds of officers and ex-inmates to the reintegration of ex-prisoners. The

assertion of many ex-offenders was that some community officers do not understand the needs of ex-inmates because of the differences in the social backgrounds of the two groups. The study revealed that several officers recognized the contrasting social backgrounds of officers and ex-inmates as playing a role in the reintegration success of some previously incarcerated individuals. The officers also stated that they perceived some ex-inmates as using their social backgrounds as a pretext not to strive to overcome reintegration obstacles.

The concept of labeling portrays individuals that possess criminal backgrounds with identities that are negative (Shlosberg, Mandery, West, & Callaghan, 2014). Labels such as ex-offender can lead to depression, loss of self-esteem, stereotyping, devaluation, rejection, and discrimination. According to Murphy et al. (2011), the concept of labeling is not centered on an act. Instead, society's reaction to individuals and the subsequent effects of the labeling define labeling. Asencio (2011) explored how the identities placed on persons by groups affect the perception of self. The researchers suggested that self-labeling, along with SIT, explains why some individuals accept the identities placed on them by others. For example, the social identity of the criminal label can become so internalized and absorbed that the criminal identity becomes the view of self. The effect of this assessment of self is that the individual assumes the behaviors associated with the identity (Asencio, 2011).

The concepts of stigma and labeling, including self-labeling and assuming the stigmatized identity, provide a contextual understanding of the lived experiences of ex-offenders (Bos, Pryor, Reeder, & Stutterheim, 2013; Shlosberg et al., 2014). Having a

criminal record generates a social reaction that is almost always damaging. According to Bos et al. (2013), the devaluing of the social identities of individuals based on the flaw placed on them by society and the acceptance of the identity flaw by some ex-offenders, result in stigma. This flaw, or attribute, is viewed as a negative based on an ideology that is framed by stereotypes. As proposed by Galinsky, Wang, Whitson, Anicich, Hugenburg, & Bodenhausen (2013) people with more power often stigmatized others with less power as a means of maintaining inequalities between groups. Those in society who view formerly incarcerated individuals as deviants maintain powerful ranks above ex-offenders even after their release from prison back into our society (Bos et al., 2013).

Social Identity Theory: Stigma

Stigma is the devalued social identity that groups or individuals ascribe to other persons or groups in society (Goffman, 1963). Social Identity Theory (SIT) partially explains the concept of stigma. The ideology of cognitions and behaviors concerning group processors was established in the 1970s with the development of SIT by Tajfel (Hogg, 2006). According to Hogg (2006), SIT is a social psychological assessment of the role of self as related to one's perception of being a member of a social group.

Tajfel (1982) found that part of the normal cognitive process of humans is to categorize things and individuals into groups to comprehend the social environment and build self-esteem. The next step in the SIT process is where persons seek to identify with an in or out categorized social group. Tajfel (1982) referred to this process as social identification. The final step in SIT is to compare the groups socially and assume the behavior of the group in which one identifies (Tajfel, 1982).

The assumption of SIT is that as part of the identity process, individuals display group behaviors such as discrimination, stereotyping, and stigmatization against persons they consider to be members of out-groups (Tajfel, 1982). Social identity and self-concept are built around intergroup relations and the treatment of members of those categorized as being members of out-groups (Hogg, 2006). According to O'Brien and Findley (2014), the cognitive processes of individuals identifying themselves in certain social groups explain the decisions made in criminal convictions and the stigma experienced by the group classified as ex-offenders. To maintain membership in a group, people often unconsciously resist disconfirming information, and instead seek and interpret the facts in a way that sustains the existing stereotype of certain groups (Todd, Galinsky, & Bodenhausen, 2012).

The origin of the word stigma is very revealing. Lloyd (2010) stated that its origin is a Greek word that referred to a tattoo or puncture mark that was usually made by a sharp item. The word, according to Goffman (1963), was used to define signs that were cut or burnt into the body of an individual to smear them as a person of immoral character. These stigmatized individuals were labeled as slaves, criminals, and people that should be avoided (Goffman, 1963). Durkheim, the 19th century sociologist, was the first to introduce the concept of social stigma by examining how criminal justice affects a society (Durkheim & Lukes, 2014).

The central idea behind Durkheim's concept was that the criminal process is mainly an indicator of society's conscience (Durkheim & Lukes, 2014). Society is not shaken by the commission of crimes. Rather, when certain crimes are committed, society

is stunned because it contradicts the beliefs held by some members. The period of industrialization brought about a sense of imbalance between the norms and values held by the society in the United States and the new norms and values of immigrants. The imbalance referred to as anomie, occurs when the lack of a comprehensive societal norm results in behaviors that are viewed by some members of society as deviant (Durkheim & Lukes, 2014). Persons who were deemed to be deviants are stigmatized by society because their behaviors do not meet the approval of the majority of individuals in their communities.

The modern concept of social stigma, as it relates to a person's identity, was first introduced by Goffman (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2012). According to Goffman (1963), social stigma is the disapproval of individuals or groups by members of society based on perceived characteristic grounds that are believed to distinguish them from other members of society. Today, unlike the days of the Greeks, stigma is not associated with a physical mark. Instead, stigma is an attribute that comes with pervasive social disapproval that yields an unending spoiled identity (Murphy et al., 2011). Stigmatization can be unconcealed and show itself in the form of avoidance, social rejection, dishonoring, dehumanization, and depersonalization of others into stereotypic distortions (Moran, 2012).

Social stigma incorporates the ideologies used by members of society to explain and rationalize their perceptions of stigmatized individuals (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2012). For example, according to Ricciardelli and Clow, many ex-offenders are terminated in the middle of their job applications or interviews when identified as being convicted of a

felony, or there is disclosure of their prior imprisonment. Although previous convictions are not visibly evident as in the case of an individual who is disabled, the photographs and stories of some ex-offenders are sometimes on the Internet and in newspapers. Therefore, in many instances, society's views on the identities of ex-offenders and the rationale for why the ex-offenders were convicted in the first place are frequently based on media representations, and not based on the true identities of the ex-offenders (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2012).

Background of the African-American Male Population

The background of African-American males cannot be described without starting with their beginnings in the United States. Since their entry into this country, African-American males have continued to struggle with the ability to define themselves in a Eurocentric society (Everett, 2014). They live within a context of stigma and racism and are deeply impacted by a history that dates all the way back to slavery (Brown, 2016). The role of race in the United States cannot be understood without recognition of the impact of the history of slavery. At times slavery has been viewed as the root cause of the breakdown in African American families (Stevenson, 2015).

Brown (2016) noted that slavery reduced African-American males to a subordinate level of dependency and diminished their ability to act as head of their households. Alexander (2012) believes the legacy of slavery continues to define the Black man's struggle in America. Today, the legacy of slavery still defines Black men's struggle in America. Although they are still sustained by the faith that sustained their ancestors and have developed more intellectual ways of problem-solving, the men are

still bound by the atrocities of White supremacy and Black inferiority. Individualized prejudices and institutionalized racism still plague the social consciousness of Black America (Warren, 2016).

While many believe that African-Americans have come a long way in society, the reality is that inequality remains to be seen in numerous areas to include the education system, housing, health care, and the labor market (Shapiro, 2017). According to Glover (2014), racial discriminatory practices have led to the exclusion or over representation of African-Americans in several areas such as housing, education, and arrests. Stevenson (2015) argued that racist perceptions of Blacks have given energy to policies and practices (e.g., such as racial exclusion in housing, impoverished schooling, and stingy social welfare programs) that have facilitated the growth of egregious, crime-spawning conditions that millions of Americans face in urban slums and rural backwaters across the nation.

Shapiro (2017) provides the following statistics that clearly shows a lack of protection, lack of health care, and lack of education: In comparison to Whites, Black children are one and a half times more likely to live in a household where parents or caregivers lack even a high school diploma, twice as likely to be arrested for property crimes, twice as likely to be unemployed not only as teens but into adulthood as well, twice as likely to become teenage mothers, infants are two and a half times more likely to die within the first year of life, three times more likely to be abandoned by parents, three times more likely to be suspended from school, mothers are four times more likely to neglect prenatal care, die in childbirth, and die from HIV infection, five times more likely

to be arrested for a violent crime and nine times more likely to be a victim of homicide (Wytsma, 2017).

According to Flynn, Holmberg, Warren and Wong (2017), African-Americans are three times as likely as Whites to live below the poverty lines. In *Race & Racisms: A Critical Approach*, Golash-Boza (2016) presented research that indicates impoverished African-American adolescents are at increased risk of experiencing psychological symptoms while existing within an oppressive society. Gaskew (2014) suggests that many African American families suffer from what is called the ‘oppressive syndrome.’ According to Gaskew (2014), “the rich historical legacy of the black American experience of keeping their eyes on the prize has been erased from the hearts and minds of today’s African American males, transforming some of them into a scared, intimidated generation, capable of some of the most gruesome acts of cultural destruction and crime imaginable” (Gaskew, 2014, p. 16).

Explanations of African-American Male Involvement in Crime

Crime occurring in the African-American male population has been viewed as a social issue with the majority of the acts committed against their own race (Warde, 2013). The aggression is said to be the result of the anger felt from oppression and environmental conditions (Erickson, 2014). Another thought on African-American involvement in crime is the belief that criminal behavior is learned through interaction with intimate personal groups. The neo-cognitive learning theory points in this direction as well (Anderson, 2014).

According to Anderson (2014), delinquency is the result of repeated exposure to dysfunctional processes. This is based on the following assumptions: delinquency is not an innate ability, at some point children learn and incorporate alienated frames of references, and negative behavioral patterns can be corrected or un-learned in spite of previous history. Reiman & Leighton (2016) states that those populations such as African-Americans and other populations who experience 'goal blockage' and 'loss of positive stimuli' are likely to become involved in criminal behavior. A review of the literature by Lilly, Cullen, & Ball (2014), proposed that strain theory is based on the idea that delinquency results when individuals are unable to achieve their goals through legitimate channels. In such cases, individuals may turn to illegitimate channels of goal achievement or strike out at the source of their frustration in anger (Hinton, 2017). While there are numerous explanations on African-American male involvement in crime, Erikson (2014) notes what is missing from literature on Black crime is the African-American perspective. The author believes that it is crucial to understand that several factors such as racism, discrimination, and segregation are partially to blame for African-American crime and delinquency. Crime is thought to be a symptom of other social problems (Barak, Leighton, & Cotton, 2014).

Arrest Rates

Countless researchers have examined and documented the disproportionate arrests and systematic incarceration of African American males (Coates, 2015). With regard to race, there is a significant difference in the incarceration rate of African American men (Walker, Spohn, & Delone, 2017). African American males are three more times likely to

be incarcerated than non-African American males (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014); similarly; Carson (2014) stated that the rate of prison incarceration for White men was 1 in 218 while it was 1 in 32 for Black men. Among men, the highest rate of incarceration is of black males aged twenty to thirty-four (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014).

According to the BJS (2014) for males ages 25 to 39, Black males were imprisoned at rates 2.5 times greater than Hispanic males and 6 times greater than White males. African Americans make up 13% of the general U.S. population, yet they constitute 28% of all arrests, 40% of all inmates held in prisons and jails, and 42% of the population on death row (Applegate, 2013). In 2013, African American males constituted 66% of the incarcerated population (Reiman & Leighton, 2016). These statistics illustrate the enormous racial discrepancy of incarceration rates among African American men (Coates, 2015).

Recidivism

In this section, I focused on the concept of recidivism and included the definition of recidivism, measurement of recidivism, and approaches to reduce recidivism. The goal of this section was to provide a background on recidivism and to highlight the gaps in the current practices on recidivism that I aimed to bridge with the results of this study.

Additionally, I presented the current recidivism statistics regarding re-incarceration rates according to federal records.

Defining recidivism. Recidivism is the re-arrest or reconviction of a prior offender within a particular period, specifically up to 2 years after release (James, 2015). Recidivism may also be the repeat offender's subsequent arrest and incarceration as part

of a continuum of the original offense rather than a separate, new event (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). In other words, such violations are simply an extension of the offenders initial crime (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). Durose et al. (2014) defined recidivism as any form of contact with the criminal justice system after previous contact, regardless of the degree of the offense. Furthermore, Durose et al. (2014) believed that recidivism is any new contact with the criminal justice structure, however minor. However, an opposing view is that for a recidivism condition to exist, it must result in incarceration (James, 2015). Durose et al. (2014) noted that the reported rates of recidivism differ according to how one defines the term. Some say it is the commission of any crime after being released from prison (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014), while others maintain that it is the commission of a crime at least as serious as the one that resulted in the initial incarceration (Durose et al., 2014; James, 2015). Specifically, for the purpose of this study, recidivism is defined as the conviction of a new crime or probation violation, resulting in the re-incarceration of an ex-offender within 2 years of the initial release from prison.

However, it is defined, recidivism is a complex subject to measure. According to the BJS (2014), tracking re-incarceration involves following individuals for a particular period and depending on national empirical data sets that contain inherent inaccuracies, create difficulty in maintaining this task (Cooper et al., 2014). For instance, if a prisoner were released in California and committed a subsequent felony in Maine, it should be possible to compare those records. Such a comparison is characteristically done by accessing the Federal Bureau of Investigation's master repository of convictions; however, the master repository of convictions has innumerable exclusions that may

impact the outcomes of re-incarceration studies (Cooper et al., 2014). Varying definitions of reoffending also contribute to the subject's complexity. For example, a convicted felon who commits a misdemeanor may not be considered a recidivist if the later offense is only a parole violation (James et al., 2013).

Measuring recidivism. Researchers have investigated this issue extensively, and some states have computed reoffending rates (Cooper et al., 2014; Glaze & Kaeble, 2014; James, 2015). Consequently, to present an inclusive synopsis of re-incarceration, this segment focuses on currently conducted national-level research (James et al., 2013). BJS (2005) findings on the reimprisonment of a group of prisoners set free in 1994 represented an all-inclusive, comprehensive national-level examination of reimprisonment. The BJS (2005), in its latest publication, reviewed reimprisonment rates for 404,638 inmates set free in 30 states in a period of 5 years from 2005 onward (Durose et al., 2014). Inmates included in the research represented about three-quarters of the prisoners set free in 2005. The 2005 BJS reimprisonment survey employed on a larger sample and a more protracted follow-up period than the prior study conducted in 1994. Empirical data demonstrated that by the end of the 5-year follow-up period, about 76.6% of inmates freed in 2005 were re-incarcerated. Moreover, the BJS established that most released inmates returned to prison within a year after their releases (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). Further, as found by Glaze and Kaeble (2014), toward the end of the first year after release, 43.4% of prisoners returned to prison, and ex-offenders that had been out for a longer period (more than 5 years) were not usually rearrested. The study by Glaze and Kaeble (2014), indicated that in comparison to the arrest rate of 43.4% 1 year after

release, only 28.5% of ex-prisoners that had not been arrested one year after release were rearrested in the next 3 years. While these statistics may seem alarming, one factor that they illustrate is that the risk of recidivism declines as the former offender's time after release becomes longer (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). Research and statistical data conducted by the BJS indicate that a larger percentage of freed property criminals were re-incarcerated more times than drug, public disorder and aggressive offenders (BJS, 2015). According to Glaze and Kaeble (2014), the broad-spectrum trend that recidivism progressed irrespective of the wrongdoings for which the justice system re-imprisoned freed inmates supports the notion that most freed inmates, whatever their crime, were likely to be re-imprisoned within 1 year after their releases. The longer a released former offender remained free, the more likely he was to continue to remain so (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). However, the BJS (2015) equally determined that offenders with a longer felony record were more likely to return to prison within 5 years of their release.

Repeat offenses and incarcerations is another daunting issue among the African-American male population (Shipp & Chiles, 2014). On numerous occasions, African-American males are released from prison and soon after re-enter the revolving doors of the criminal justice system (Butler, 2017). Of those who re-enter the criminal justice system, only one-third are White, while 47% are Black and 16% are Hispanic (USDOJ, 2014). Overall, the U.S. Department of Justice (2014) reports at least two thirds of those re-entering the Criminal Justice System are minorities. Childs (2015) profile of the returning prisoner is characteristically described as mostly male, minority, and unskilled.

In addition, they are uneducated, have a history of substance abuse, unemployment, homelessness, and may have physical or mental disabilities.

According to Latessa and Listwan (2014), a major problem with recidivism lies in the fact that individuals who enter the criminal justice system have serious issues that have not been addressed. Johnson, Rochleau, & Martin (2016) states that while in prison, these issues continue to go unresolved. Thus, the perpetuating cycle of incarceration begins and is ever present. Suprenant (2017) specified that prisons have become dumping grounds for the socially ill. There are certain other factors such as elevated arrest rates and unequal treatment in our nation's justice system that increases recidivism rates among the African-American male population (Mowen & Visser, 2016).

Dynamic Risk, Criminogenic Need Factors, and Recidivism

Determining dynamic risk and understanding an offender's criminogenic needs will be highlighted in the study. The identification of dynamic risk coupled with identifying an offender's criminogenic needs may assist probation officers, forensic counselors and community advocacy leaders to prepare more effective reentry supportive services programs in order to reduce recidivism over time. In this section, I provided a thorough introduction of dynamic risk, criminogenic need factors and recidivism as they related to the current literature.

Dynamic requirements (risks) may have a significant impact on future criminal behavior as it relates to subsequent illegal activities (Hamilton et al., 2013). Previous studies have attempted to address how participation in a brief but structured reentry programs can enhance the general risk degree (Buckner 2015; Hamilton et al., 2013).

However, there is inadequate literature regarding how prisoners' behaviors change over a given period after release and their impact on recidivism risk. Researchers have identified dynamic risks in the treatment (Alessandro 2017; Hamilton et al., 2013). However, these risks are artifacts of similar behaviors and psychological vulnerabilities at various phases of assessment (Miller, 2014). According to the research study conducted by Miller (2014), dynamic risks manifest themselves as criminogenic need factors in criminal behavior under two circumstances. First, when the person feels that such behavior is the only way to meet certain needs, and second when the person feels that such behavior is the optimal, cheapest, easiest, or most convenient way to meet certain needs.

Furthermore, the research indicated the latter behavior is more reprehensible because it is a deliberate choice rather than a response to a perhaps uncontrollable compulsion (Gavel & Mandracchia, 2016). Skeem et al. (2013) performed a study on changes in criminogenic needs using baseline data (joining community rehabilitation institutions) and a sample of parolees, with the help of the LSI-R. The authors discovered that parolees, over time post-release, changed substantially, particularly in the 10 main criminogenic needs assessed by LSI-R (Skeem et al., 2013). However, the parolees did not change in substance abuse or psychological well-being (Skeem et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, the study failed to assess the degree to which these changes influenced post-supervision behaviors, including substance abuse, behavioral modification, or employment obtainment, which affect the study's value in measuring recidivism (Skeem et al., 2013). The study's perspective is valuable in terms of examining recidivism risk over time; as it supports the observations of other studies that recidivism risk declines as

the time since release increases (Durose et al., 2014; Glaze & Kaeble, 2014; Skeem et al., 2013). In a study that also used the LSI-R, Prince and Butters (2014) investigated the effects of needs on subsequent criminal activities using collective LSI-R scores in examining 360 ex-offenders who had been on probation. They discovered that probationers who had higher-than-average cumulative LSI-R scores had increased chances of being rearrested (about 67%) compared to those who had lower scores (roughly 42%) within 2 years. Furthermore, Prince and Butters (2014) study reported changes in the cumulative LSI-R score which occurred over time however, the study did not specify the particular needs that led to good or bad results. Nevertheless, necessary questions of clarity regarding the dynamic criminogenic needs that promote better outcomes are still left unanswered. This is due to the fact that the literature regarding criminogenic needs only focuses on how researchers can examine them in the context of preventing and/or understanding crime; the research does not address criminogenic needs in the context of recidivism, which this study aims to address (Prince & Butters, 2014; Skeem et al., 2013). Concisely, the complete identification of an inmate's dynamic risks assessment and criminogenic need factors while incarcerated may assist probation officers, forensic counselors and community advocacy leaders prepare more effective reentry supportive services and counseling programs for ex-offenders in order to help reduce recidivism rates over time (Singh, Kroner, Worwith, Desmarais, & Hamilton, 2017).

Legal Biases Leading to Higher Rates of Incarceration

Glover (2014) points out unfairness to the minority population in two areas: the arrest and incarceration rates of Blacks compared to Whites and the rates at which more Blacks receive prison sentences compared to Whites who are more likely to receive fines, probation, or suspended sentences. According to Davis (2017) drugs and nonviolent crimes are the major reasons why African-Americans are arrested. Western & Muller (2013) states the war on drugs dates back to the early 80s, where African-Americans were the major target in the war on drugs. Butler (2017) equated this war to an act of ‘social cleansing.’

In 2014, 88% of recidivists sentenced for crack cocaine use were African-Americans, and 4.1% were White (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014). This disparity is likely because of the fact that cocaine is much more costly. Crack cocaine, which is cheaper and more readily available, carries a much harsher punishment if one is found guilty of using and distributing it (Hinton, 2017). Despite the fact that government sponsored research has shown little racial variation in drug use, African-Americans represent the highest number of those imprisoned for drug related activities (Mallea, 2014). According to federal law, a lesser amount of crack equals mandatory minimum of five years in prison while possession of raw cocaine equals five years of probation (Hari, 2016).

Poor Legal Representation

Minorities are often subjected to poor legal representation (Miller, 2010). While the United States Supreme Court has upheld the decision to ensure that legal counsel is

available to all, the quality of counsel is an entirely different matter. Miller (2010) believes that accused African-Americans and other minorities are often poorly represented by state funded counsel that is inadequate, to say the least. If poor representation is not enough, Shipp & Chiles (2014) reports that prosecutors often 'overcharge' criminals. One such example cited by Western & Muller (2013) is 'framing charges to the highest degree of seriousness.' Due to inadequate representation and fear of serving long sentences, individuals will plead guilty to crimes even when they are sometimes innocent. Miller (2010) stated:

The accused who is facing incarceration is faced with stakes that are drastically higher due to such overcharging. The accused may have legal counsel to represent their case in the court proceedings, but the possibility still exists that the jury of the court of law may convict him of a more serious charge anyway. If the accused is unable to afford private legal counsel and must rely on an attorney who is appointed by the courts, then the risk of conviction of a more serious charge is greater because the majority of the court-appointed attorneys are faced with a tremendous case load and oftentimes felony cases may not get the attention that is needed in terms of the defense aspect. (Miller, 2010, p. 58-61)

Classification of Victims

Another area where one can find racial disparities is the rate at which individuals are considered to be victims (Ferguson, 2016). Taking Black on Black crime for example, Marger (2013) states African-Americans are not viewed as victims. In addition, Forbes & Kelley (2016) notes that violated prisoners are not seen as victims either. The portrayal of

victims is of middle or upper-class Whites who are victimized by minorities. When Blacks victimize Whites, there was a high value attached to the White victim and the racial fears of authorities engender severe treatment (Gilbert, 2014). According to Butler (2017), African- Americans will serve more prison time for crimes committed against Whites than they would for crimes committed against other African-Americans.

Neighborhoods Dominated by Criminal Elements

A common factor found among African-American male offenders is their socio-economic status. The neighborhoods African-American males grow up in are often dominated by criminal elements (Wytsma, 2017). In general, low-income African-Americans are more likely to be isolated in deteriorating neighborhoods than are poor Hispanic and non-Whites (Flynn, Holmberg, Warren & Wong, 2017). In the literature, Shapiro (2017) argued that poor local contexts typically expose young residents to violence and crime while isolating them from conventional role models and employment opportunities. In these poor communities, both families and schools suffer from inadequate social and economic resources. As such, homes and schools are often unsupportive and unsafe, increasing the likelihood of adverse behavioral outcomes for young African-Americans (Ore, 2013).

Marger (2013) research explored the demographic and ecological characteristics of urban neighborhoods according to variations in their levels of visible drug sales. The results indicated that the neighborhoods most burdened by visible drug markets are distinctive not so much by virtue of the undesirable Ferguson (2016) suggests not only that neighborhoods with higher levels of visible drug sales lack the type of collective

efficacy that would enable residents to keep out criminal activity, but they also appear to lack the ability to draw in desirable businesses.

Poor Education

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed the ‘No Child Left behind Act.’ (US Department of Education, 2014). While society continues to believe in and support a ‘no child left behind policy,’ the high school dropout rate for minorities continues to soar (Digneo, 2011). As technology continues to advance, the high school dropout rate increases (Digneo, 2011). According to Bryant (2015), African-American urban children are failing at record numbers, and it appears that they are forgotten. Digneo (2011) describes them as ‘Throw Away Kids.’ In *Reducing the Black Male Dropout Rate*, Kunjufu (2010) found that it is evident that for many male African-Americans, the schooling process is not a positive and nurturing developmental experience that helps to build character, shape values, and reduce vulnerability to social pressure and psychological stress. Rather, for many of these young men, there may be a chronic sense of failure and low academic self-worth that begins in the early grades and continues through to high school, for those who make it that far (Howard, 2013).

The African-American population represents the largest percentage of high school dropouts, which places them at an even greater political and economic disadvantage (Bonner & King, 2014). Bonner & King (2014) points out that children who suffer from the poverty deprivation syndrome are likely to attend schools that are lacking in resources, funding, staffing and community support. In his research, McGlothlin (2017) argues that rather than embracing the syndrome-affected children, schools treat them in a

hostile fashion, labeling them delinquent rather than acknowledging that their behavior is learned. The syndrome affected children receive no respect from the school.

Thus, having receiving no respect at home or school, they have no respect the people and property at school. School officials quickly reciprocate-no respect given equals no respect received. The circle of human degration continues, with the syndrome-affected children receiving the message ‘you aren’t worth much’ (Evans-Brown, 2015). Thus, African American males attending school are often seen fitting the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure when it comes to academic achievement (Bryant, 2015).

According to Evans-Brown (2015) dismantling this self-fulfilling prophecy of inevitable academic failure among the group requires the allegiance, fortitude, commitment and dedication of educators. McGlothlin (2017) describes a perpetuating cycle where a lack of education leads to crime and crime leads to more prison, and no reform or rehabilitation leads to repeat offenses, and the cycle continues. A review of the literature by Howard (2013) indicates, if current trends continue, by the year 2020, 70% of Black males will be unemployed, in jail, dead, on drugs, or alcoholics. Based on the literature, one can clearly see that the struggles of African-American male offenders are many. Those who work with this population must understand these men’s historical background and socio-economic state and issues (Walker & Spohn, 2017). While the above information provides an insight into the many issues faced outside of corrections, the current state of our nations’ prison system may be even more limiting to successful outcomes (Hamilton & Campbell, 2013).

The Current State of Our Nation's Prison System

Politicians and judges may think they are sending a message via tougher crime laws, but their intended audiences are not listening (Cochran, 2014). Some would argue that prisons have become mere dumping grounds for the socially ill (Fleury-Steiner & Longalez, 2013). Rather than re-socialize and retrain the offender for successful reentry to the community, many have argued that prisons have become mere dumping grounds for the social and economic ills of society such as underemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, dysfunctional family life, inadequate education, inadequate housing, and inadequate and inaccessible health care services (Allen & Sawhney, 2014). Our prisons are filled with non-violent and drug offending criminals. Whitehead, Dodson, and Edwards (2012) describe prison as an expensive way to make bad people worse.

In their literature on prison reform, Whitehead, Dodson, and Edwards (2012) spoke very candidly about the conditions of prison. The authors talked about the inconsistency between our nation's crime rates and the increase in the number of new prisons. The literature pointed out the fact that he has yet to see the hardened 'super-predators' that were supposedly the source of the increase in prisons. Based on their perspective, Hinton (2017) the African American male offenders are currently very young prisoners tried as adults and older prisoners who are not granted parole. And much of those prisoners are serving time for drug related crimes (Butler, 2017).

The mission of jails and prisons remain safety and security by means of a tight control system (Krisberg, Marchionna, & Hartney, 2014). Stohr & Walsh (2017) compares the Department of Corrections to that of a transportation system. Graff (2015)

suggests that much like a transportation system, prison officials manage the traffic flow as efficiently as possible and let someone else worry about where the people are headed. Offenders who are fortunate may have access to a halfway house, while others are given enough funds for a bus ticket and released back into society (Fonseca, Hart, & Klink, 2014).

Nationwide, more funding is spent on confinement versus rehabilitation (Clear, Reisig, Petrosino & Cole, 2016). For example, states such as California pour more funding into the prison system than on higher education (Clear, Reisig, Petrosino, & Cole, 2016). According to the research conducted nationwide, the average cost per prisoner is \$32,000, more than it would cost to provide an offender with a college education or technical training (Stohr & Walsh, 2017). Tougher crime laws have led to the need for more correctional facilities. Therefore, privatizing prison has become a major financial industry (Binder, 2017). Johnson, Rocheleau, & Martin (2016) noted that if communities and prisons have a vested interest in keeping their cells filled, then changes in criminal justice policies have given them a growing means to affect their personal interests and drive their own growth.

Prison industries are making out like 'bandits,' as many outside agencies hold contracts with various corrections facilities and are being provided with cheap labor (Pfaff, 2017). While some believe that recidivists benefit from slave labor in the prison setting, recidivists are sometimes performing in dead end jobs that do not increase their chances for employment outside of the prison setting (Binder, 2017). Kicenski (2013) also agree that the 'scant' vocational rehabilitation programs offered in prison are of little

value to employment outside the correctional setting. Eisen (2017) describe the rate at which private industries benefit from those incarcerated as ‘correctional Keynesianism.’

Eisen (2017) argue that the prison construction boom fed by the rising market of Black recidivists is a job and tax-base creator for predominantly White communities that are generally far removed from urban minority concentrations. Faulk (2016) are disturbed at the fact that small towns for example, reap great financial gain from the prison industry. As few like to discuss, the mostly White residents of those towns are building their economic dreams on the transport and lockdown of un-free African-Americans from impoverished inner-city neighborhoods. Faulk (2016) bold statement ‘jobs for Whites, bunks for Black’ provides a very clear outlook on the increase in new correctional facilities.

Increase in the Number of Prisoners and Parole Releases

American correctional populations have experienced a substantial growth since the early 1970s (Kaeble, Glaze, Tsoutis, & Minton, 2016). The United States now claims the highest rate of imprisonment of any democracy in the world. Policies such as mandatory minimums, truth-in-sentencing laws, and ‘three strikes’ laws have increased the number of those incarcerated and added to the length of stay experienced by the average inmate. With high incarceration rates comes increased numbers of those who will be returning to society. Additionally, 93% of all inmates serving time in a correctional facility will eventually be released at some point (James, 2015). In 2014, the numbers of those admitted to state and federal prisons (739,132) were comparable to those returning

to the streets (735,454) (BJS, 2016). Given the number of people who will be returning to society, a greater need for social services could potentially arise (Crow & Smykla, 2013).

Overall, prisoners are serving longer sentences, with fewer pre-release programs being offered (Johnson & Cullen, 2015). Under this policy, many prisoners are being released without stipulations recommended by parole boards or post-release supervisions in place (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). For those who are released with stipulations, these are often less strict, and less individualized, which does little to address the inmate needs or individual issues. Extended prison terms translate into longer periods of separation from normal societal routines, time away from family and friends, work, and other every day on-goings of living in free society (West, Shivers, & Addullah, 2016). Prolonged separation may affect a person's social adjustment when returning to society. In turn, this exclusion from society may create further obstacles to reintegrate into society successfully due to a lack of positive socialization with community networks (Mellow, Christensen, Warwick, & Willison, 2013).

For the greater part of the twentieth century, reentry and inmate's preparedness took a much greater priority in correctional programming and release practices (Miller, 2014). Some critics may suggest that inmates were not prepared to transition back into their communities during this period in corrections. Under a rehabilitative model, prisoners were often offered and exposed to correctional programming involving educational and vocational programs. These included prison industry work programs, substance abuse counseling, and mental health counseling (Fonseca, & Klink, 2014). With inmates' release dependent upon parole board's discretionary decisions, inmates

may have been more than likely to volunteer to partake in such programming in order to impress the members. Along with increased inmate participation in correctional programming, parole board's considered inmates' housing, employment, and mental health and substance abuse treatment, and family issues (Harding, Wise, Dobson, & Morenoff, 2014). If plans were not satisfactory, offenders could be reassigned to parole officers during a short period of time after release, or release could be denied.

Since the early 1980s, correctional programming, as opposed to the rehabilitative model, has increasingly become more punitive, decreasing services and the amount of supervision for those returning to communities (Liebling & Murana, 2013). The 'tough on crime' attitudes of politicians (and public perception) and assumptions that 'nothing works' in correctional programming, sparked a transition in correctional philosophies from medical/rehabilitative focus to one of retribution and incapacitation (Allen & Sawhney, 2014). Due to change in philosophies, expenditures for treatment have suffered, and funding has been funneled to other costs such as staff salaries, benefits, operations, and renovations (Stohr & Walsh, 2017). After these expenses, as little as 5% of some correctional budgets may have been set aside for rehabilitative services (West, Shivers, & Abdullah, 2016). This shift possibly added to the many issues ex-offenders face upon returning to society, and increasing the difficulties in resolving these issues (Western, Braga, Davis, & Sirois, 2015).

Not only can the punitive nature of correctional policies work against meeting the needs of inmates, prisons themselves can breed criminal activity. (Latessa & Holsinger, 2015). Criminologists have contended that prisons act as criminal universities, providing

offenders with the environment to extend on their criminal abilities, thoughts, and drives. Prisons can allow offenders to develop stronger ties to the criminal world and develop and improve their criminal skills (Stohr & Walsh, 2015). Once released, some of those who were incarcerated may have increased their attachments to criminal involvement (Stojkivoic, 2017). This makes adjustment to life in free society more difficult and adds the pressure to living a crime-free lifestyle (Maruna, 2014).

Rehabilitation and Life after Prison

Most prison systems do little to facilitate a smooth transition from prison to community (Grommon, 2013). The complexities of reestablishing life after prison in the days and weeks after release are many and include the following: finding a place to live; securing formal identification; reestablishing ties with family; returning to high-risk places and situations; and the daunting challenge of finding a job, often with a poor work history and now, a criminal record (Krannich, 2016). The true test of an inmate's survival occurs after release. Yet, the Department of Corrections bears no responsibility for offenders upon their release (Stohr & Walsh, 2015). Without the proper support mechanisms, offenders are bound to return to prison.

Joan Peterselia is a renowned criminal justice consultant who has done extensive research on 'the returning prisoner.' Peterselia (2009) believes that reintegration practices needs to be reformed and recommends changes in four important areas. One is changing the prison environment so that it will promote life skills rather than violence and domination. Krisberg, Marchionna, & Hartney (2014) speak very candidly about the harsh life inside prisons. The authors believe that tragedies inside prisons make it even

harder for offenders to lead a stable life upon release. In grave detail, he describes the rate at which prisoners are victimized and often time infected with HIV.

Middlemass (2017) cannot comprehend how anyone who suffers such victimization is supposed to put together a reasonably normal life after leaving prison. Quite apart from the heartwarming tales of reformed inmates, there are plenty of hard heads in the penitentiary who may or may not eventually be rehabilitated-but who, in the meantime, destroy the lives of those prisoners who are soft enough to change (Liem & Sampson, 2016). According to Gunnison & Helfgott (2013), another area for change is prison release and revocation practices. A third area for change is revising post-prison services and supervision (Stohr & Mears, 2018). Lastly, another recommendation for change is fostering collaborations with communities by developing partnerships with service providers, ex-convicts, law enforcement, family members, victim advocates, and neighborhoods to support offenders (Davis, 2017).

Stojkovic (2017) also agree as the author believes rehabilitation is pointless without reintegration. In his scholarly work, Stojkovic (2017) noted that the absolute essential pre-requisite for any educational or therapeutic program is the belief or at least hope in the participating inmates' minds that their lives can really change for the better, that the skills they are about to learn will help them achieve some measure of success upon release. But there is currently no way to convince prisoners to make this crucial leap of faith because so many of our fellow convicts are recidivists who tell us in great detail about the nearly insurmountable obstacles we will face in the free world (Thomas, 2014).

General Issues Surrounding Ex-Offender Reentry

As previously noted, many of those returning to the streets are undereducated and unskilled, with the added stigma created by a prison record, resulting in African American male ex-offenders experiencing difficulty in finding employment and securing safe housing (Ricciardelli & Peters, 2017). State and federal correctional budgets are generally reserved for construction of new facilities, staffing the institutions, and health-care for inmates. Thus, budgets may leave little funding for programs that may help prepare returning men and women. Literacy rates and job readiness among inmates has continually decreased since 1990 (United States Congress & United States Representatives, 2018).

With fewer provisions being made for inmate programming and current sentencing policies, the system of incarceration and reentry services is resulting in greater challenges for successful reentry (Trega, 2014). Most African American male offenders will be released back into society. This in turn means more returning offenders who encounter or potentially could encounter more difficulties and challenges of reentry (Briney, 2014). The next section discussed the many challenges and problems African American male ex-offenders face when returning to society and their communities.

Employment

While achieving higher levels of education may lead an ex-offender of African American decent to have high expectations, those who are less educated, many of whom value and hope for additional education, may have expectations of education leading to better paid jobs that stem from the mistaken belief that education always helps in

employment. Such expectations often lead to frustration, depression, and a lack of self-esteem and often end up increasing recidivism (Ricciardelli & Peters, 2017). Schlager (2013) argued that employment is one of the key factors that can stop a former prisoner from committing new crimes. Employment often creates a sense of self-worth and an investment in the future that leads to full and legal participation in the community.

Chaney & Schwartz (2017) observed, the personnel of placement programs that specialize in rehabilitating African American male ex-offenders regularly note the connection between recidivism rates and employment opportunities. Nevertheless, even with the obvious importance of employment and its direct association with successful reentry, African American male ex-offenders experience increasing difficulty locating jobs. Individuals with a criminal record are one of the groups most separated when it comes to hiring practices (Mezheritsky, 2017).

Pinard (2013) argued that employers were not as willing to employ former felons as they were members of any other disadvantaged group. Schlager (2013) stated that applicants who had only earned a high school equivalency diploma (GED), were on welfare, had a blemished work history, or were unemployed were likely to be more successful in securing employment than individuals with a criminal record. Additionally, employers in five major cities stated that they would deliberately not employ an ex-offender, and almost one third 'checked the criminal histories of their most recently hired employees' (Loafman & Little, 2014).

The law, however, does offer some protection against discrimination for employment applicants who have a criminal history. If an employment policy shows

prejudice against the formerly incarcerated and results in an unequal racial impact, employers must show a ‘business of a criminal necessity’ before automatically prohibiting former inmates from obtaining employment (Garth-James, 2013). However, a criminal record can have an impact on an individual’s ability to obtain a job even when there is no correlation between the job and the crime committed, due to the shame created by a criminal conviction (Bible, 2013). Aware that discrimination may result from the admission of a criminal conviction, applicants may not wish to be truthful on their applications, but because of the simplicity with which employers can verify background records through the Internet, there is little point in trying to conceal a criminal record (Bumiller, 2015).

Pager and Western (2015) sought to answer three questions: whether and to what extent employers use information about criminal histories to make hiring decisions; the extent to which race continues to serve as a major barrier to employment; and whether the effect of a criminal record differs for Black and White applicants. Rodriguez (2015) revealed that there was a hefty and important effect of a criminal record, with 34% of Whites without criminal records receiving callbacks relative to only 17% of Whites with criminal records (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2016). Thus, a criminal record diminishes the likelihood of a response by 50%.

Pager and Western (2015) also found that Blacks continued to suffer from lower rates of employment relative to Whites and that, among Blacks without criminal records, only 15% received callbacks, relative to 34% of White non-criminals. In addition, Whites with criminal records received a more positive response (17%) relative to Blacks without

criminal records (14%). Based on this information, it is clear that race continues to be a major factor when it comes to providing employment opportunities, especially given that the effects of a criminal record appear more pronounced for Blacks than for Whites. The ratio of offers for non-offenders relative to offers for ex-offenders for Whites was 2:1; the same ratio for Blacks was nearly 3:1. The effect of a criminal record was thus 40% larger for Blacks than for Whites (Decker, Spohn, Ortiz, & Hedberg, 2014).

This evidence is indicative of the way in which associations between race and crime have an impact on interpersonal evaluations. Employers, already hesitant to hire Blacks, appear even more reluctant to hire Blacks with proven criminal involvement. It is no wonder that the employment obstacles of minority status and a criminal record are exacerbated, intensifying the stigma toward ex-offenders. There have been damaging effects on families and communities of color regarding the high number of incarcerated inmates of color (Cerda, Stenstrom, & Matthew, 2015).

According to a BJS report, among the 2,293,157 male prisoners locked up in federal or state prisons or local jails, there are 3,138 Black male prisoners per 100,000 Black males in the United States in prison or jail, compared to 1,259 Latino per 100,000 and 481 White male inmates per 100,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). The challenges facing the criminal justice system, such as the unprecedented increase in the incarceration of American citizens and especially the disproportionately high imprisonment of inmates of color (Raskin, 2015), there should be a concerted effort on behalf of the criminal justice system to collaborate and partner with communities. This

should especially be demonstrated within communities of color in an endeavor to assist formerly incarcerated persons transition back into mainstream society (Hernandez, 2013).

For the past couple of decades, Black men have been sent to prisons at a faster rate than they have been enrolling in college. In fact, according to Mauer (2013), there were an estimated 791,000 Black men in prisons and jails; this population outnumbers the approximately 603,000 Black men in higher education. Social inequality continues to exist as communities of color experience drastically higher rates of unemployment than other communities in the United States. The unemployment rate for Blacks continues to be steady at twice the rate for White workers and has been so since 1958 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

In 1988, the Black unemployment rate was 2.57 times the White rate and was the highest Black-to-White unemployment differential ever recorded. Although the nation witnessed an economic boom in the decade of the 1990s, that increase was barely felt in the nation's Black communities. In fact, the large discrepancies in unemployment rates between Blacks and Whites that existed in the 1990s and 1980s continued during the bullish times of the 1990s. Black communities increasingly became associated with high and, more troubling still, 'permanent' unemployment rates (Ryan, 2016).

When the characteristics of criminal history, race, and youth are merged, the unemployment rates for these population groups rise. The unemployment rate for Black youth aged 16 to 24 years not having a high school diploma was 36.7% in September 2009, while the unemployment rate for White college graduates was 2.0% (Soloman, 2012). As a result of these unemployment rates, African American male ex-offenders

begin to believe that they must take matters into their own hands and create some form of better life through crime. Crime is a rebellion against the current social organization, as well as a means of overcoming oppression in addition to the feeling that there are not many other options for earning money (Middlemass, 2017).

Paul-Emile (2014) examined the literature regarding employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated African American male persons and the disenfranchisement of these individuals. Paul-Emile (2014) noted that Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure mandates that individuals who enter a guilty plea for felonies in the United States must be advised that there will be restrictions upon their release from incarceration regarding the right to vote and their ability to gain some types of employment. These restrictions are in place because of issues of distrust that exist among the society at large, employers, and the incarcerated individual. However, even though Rule 11 has been challenged by the Supreme Court in *Richardson v. Ramirez*, there are still numerous employers who refuse to hire the formerly incarcerated person because of fear that ‘once a criminal, always a criminal.’

Lofaso & Estreicher (2015) suggested that restrictions on employment for minorities are lessened in some cases because of the provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which offers protection from discrimination: The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s (EEOC) interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides some protection to minorities when employment policies discriminate against formerly incarcerated persons. The EEOC interpretation requires that, where an employment policy that discriminates against formerly incarcerated persons will have a

disparate racial impact, employers must show a ‘business necessity’ before automatically disqualifying that formerly incarcerated individual (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014). These barriers to employment for the formerly incarcerated African American male nevertheless continue to exist throughout society. Decker, Spohn, Ortiz and Hedberg (2014) posit that barriers to employment vary depending on the location of the African American male ex-offender and the application of existing laws. Moreover, the adherence to those laws by employers and the willingness of the African American male ex-offender to fight for employment rights are factors in whether or not ex-convicts are allowed to participate in the American workforce.

According to a report by the National Employment Law Project, seven states completely bar ex-felons from public employment (Bible, 2013). One other state, Oregon, disallows all felons, but only for 3 years after release. In another four states, the ban affects only felons committing certain crimes. The type of disqualifying crimes can be broad; for example, in Delaware, persons convicted of ‘an infamous crime’ are disqualified from public employment; in Georgia, the ban applies to those convicted of a felony involving ‘moral turpitude’; and in Kentucky, it applies only to felons convicted of bribery. Florida and Minnesota only disqualify felons from public employment when the offense is employment-related. Michigan and North Carolina have a parallel philosophy, only barring felons from employment with the Department of Corrections or as police or sheriffs, respectively. Three states bar ex-felons from status as public officers but not from other public employment. In the remaining 31 states and the District of Columbia,

eligibility for public employment is restored upon discharge from prison (Jones Day Publications, 2014).

The significance of the literature by Loafman & Little (2014) pertains to both employment and voting rights, as well as to the ability of formerly incarcerated African American males to pursue other goals, including education. When an initial barrier to achievement exists, such as gaining employment, for the formerly incarcerated person, achieving other goals becomes impossible. Gaskew (2014) stipulated that the most significant factor associated with employment and the ability of formerly incarcerated African American males to progress in their lives is social support. This seems to be a reasonable assumption because beliefs about hiring or providing opportunities for formerly incarcerated persons will determine if employers are willing to give these individuals jobs. Beliefs about considering ex-offenders for employment include the belief that they are not loyal and are unreliable (Atkinson & Armstrong, 2013).

In December 2002, the EEOC (i.e., Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) filed a lawsuit in a Wisconsin Federal Court in opposition to the Target Corporation, alleging prejudice against Black job applicants at nearly a dozen Wisconsin stores (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014). In depositions for the lawsuit, Target employees confessed to routinely throwing away the job applications of Black individuals who attended job fairs held at several Milwaukee universities. Examples of deliberate forms of bias become visible sporadically in a blitz of media attention. As much as these examples provide clear demonstrations of ongoing forms of racial bias, they simultaneously strengthen the idea that acts of inequity in contemporary America are

somewhat usual events committed by unusually malicious actors. Under more typical circumstances, uninterrupted discrimination in America appears to have all but gone away. Certainly, ‘the presence of famous Black athletes, actors, and politicians offers an image of an open door to opportunity for Blacks, one no longer conditioned by the stigma of skin color’ (Pinard, 2013).

Housing

Of the many challenges facing returning African American male prisoners, none is as abrupt as the challenge of finding shelter. Work can wait. Drug treatment can wait. Most connections to community-based health care can wait. Re-establishing relations with families may take a while. On the first day after prison, however, the released prisoner’s immediate concern is ‘Where will I sleep tonight?’ (Krannich, 2016). Ex-offenders remain uncertain, usually awaiting decisions by others to see if they will be welcomed home. Many start out with one housing solution and wind up shuttling between family, friends, shelters, and the street. Some live in homeless shelters or mental institutions. Some return quickly to prison. Housing, therefore, has been appropriately characterized as the lynchpin that holds the reintegration process together (Lattimore & Visher, 2015).

An ex-offender’s first priority upon release is to find suitable housing, but ‘suitable’ is quite obviously defined differently depending on one’s vantage point (Liem & Sampson, 2016). As Craig, Gannon, and Dixon (2013) observed, if one were to ask a representative of the criminal justice system—a parole officer or a member of law enforcement—to define the term ‘suitable’, one would probably elicit responses that

involved some combination of verifiable address where the parole office could locate the parolee, conduct spot checks, and monitor whether the ex-offender was conforming to the conditions of parole. Certainly, finding housing and keeping an address is often a stipulation of parole. Thus, housing takes on a more managerial aspect, offering the justice system some capacity to follow and perhaps be in command of the ex-offender's activities (Denney, Tewksbury, & Jones 2014).

Suitable housing from an African American male ex-offender's point of view would probably have more personal and deep meaning. The term not only holds all of the promise that the word home might suggest for anyone needing shelter, but also creates a significant foundational link to other steps in the reentry process. A place to live that is safe and dependable provides the stability necessary to adjust to living outside of confinement. It might even offer a refuge from the struggles of dealing with the other demands of reentry—reunification of family, physical and mental health treatment, and connecting to a community (Pelley & Hall, 2016).

Transitioning back into the civilian world for many formerly incarcerated African American males means altering their pre-incarceration living conditions. Hernandez (2013) outlined research that focused on the issue of prisoner reentry into society and found that housing is one of the many life problems that incarcerated persons face upon exiting prison. In some locales, apartment complexes and rental agencies will not rent to ex-convicts, and the location an ex-convict can reside in can be limited by law, as there are residential restriction areas in certain parts of the world (Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, & Gordon, 2016). Thus, many African American ex-convicts who have difficulty

finding appropriate housing end up living in halfway houses or in other forms of temporary shelter, which has an impact on the living and future arrangements they can make (Armstrong & Durnescu, 2016).

Santos (2013) found that individuals facing financial crisis, like many African American male ex-convicts, often turn to public housing as a means of affordable housing. For individuals who have been incarcerated, however, the Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act of 1996 and the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 mandate that sex offenders and certain types of drug users cannot live in public housing projects. Moreover, under federal law, public housing authorities can deny access to public housing at their own discretion (Thomas, 2014). What this means is that if the housing authority deems that an ex-offender might disrupt the living situation in a housing complex, the housing authority has the legal right to deny that individual housing. Furthermore, the housing authority has the right to deny housing to individuals who have been arrested but not convicted of acts that the housing authority believes would pose problems within their units.

Ekunwe, Slater, and Jones (2011) contended that housing authorities often deny individuals housing when those individuals have either served time for a drug-related offense or have simply been arrested for such an offense. This is also true of non-public housing rental managers and private landlords because of the widespread availability of arrest and inmate records on the Internet. This type of discrimination also prevents African American male ex-convicts from receiving financial aid for higher education endeavors (Stohr & Mears, 2018). The conclusion of the literature indicated that being

arrested for a drug-related offense closes numerous doors and deeply affects an ex-convict's ability to find appropriate housing (Stohr & Mears, 2018). While this does not specifically address housing as a roadblock to continuing with education, we can see that the same rules that apply to the denial of public housing apply to the denial of educational benefits when drug-related offenses are considered. Moreover, if one does not have a home, studying in a secure location is difficult or impossible (Davis, 2017).

The bulk of prisoners seek shelter with family members upon being discharged (Henry & Robert, 2016). Schlager (2013) emphasized that self-concept, civic participation, and perceived identity as a conforming and engaged citizen are related to ex-offenders' deterrence from crime. Citizenship is not only a legal status, but also a symbolic concept that emphasizes an individual's connection to the rights, responsibilities, roles, and resources that society offers (Schlager, 2013). The marginalization and social exclusion of African American male ex-offenders reduce their citizenship potential and may, in turn, weaken their investment in mainstream social values and heighten their resentment toward society (Grommon, 2013). By ostracizing, stigmatizing, and segregating ex-offenders, they are left with fewer opportunities for conforming to mainstream values and affiliating with law-abiding citizens (Barak, Leighton, & Cotton, 2014).

Hardships that offenders face pertaining to housing and employment, social stigma, a sense of vulnerability, and relationship problems are factors that can lead to recidivism (Soyer, 2016). Conversely, employment, social bonds, and stability enhance the likelihood of successful reintegration for offenders (Williams, 2016). Wieland (2016)

contended that this type of social discrimination is what curtails formerly incarcerated people's ability to reenter society and to change their path in the world, including completing or continuing their education. As the literature has shown, there is a shortage of accessible housing for all low-income individuals. The housing predicament becomes all the more severe when one attaches the serious problem of a conviction. Given the convergence of factors that operate against a formerly incarcerated person in his or her hunt for housing, no single solution will be sufficient. A necessary requirement for alleviating this problem is making the commitment to recognize that it exists and should not persist (Homsley, 2013).

The need to provide housing for African American male ex-offenders who have been in prison is clearly connected to their ability to transition into valuable members of their communities (Soyer, 2016). There are many individuals returning from custody struggling with addiction and drug-related offenses. Even in the best situation, their journey is difficult. However, allowing them to become homeless will only exacerbate the problem. Certainly, a lack of housing by itself functions as a predictor of recidivism. In addition, many treatment professionals make a case that without established housing, relapse is almost certain (Crow & Smykla, 2013).

Social Support

Many of the studies of family relationships of former prisoners have shown that family support mechanisms are important in successful former prisoner reentry (Fonseca, Hart, & Klink, 2014). Even though there are many studies within the available literature focusing on different methods whereby family members support former prisoners, the

results of these studies reveal a limitation in the findings. This limitation is in the fact that the support given to the former prisoner is often seen as permanent and unidirectional with the former prisoner being the only recipient of support (Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Braatz, 2014).

There is more information about the individual former prisoners than there is known about one or more family relationships associated with the former prisoner. This is because researchers have disregarded important aspects of family relationships—specifically how former prisoners and family members distinguish and substitute social support. Consequently, questions about the underlying rationales for these exchanges have gone unanswered (Morenoff & Harding, 2014).

In his literature, Thomas (2014) argued that cognitive–emotional stress is linked with lack of family support for formerly incarcerated persons. This was called ‘stress depress,’ which they defined as a transient situational reaction characterized by cognitive realignment of definitions and expectation, as well as related emotional and somatic reactions. The author reviewed previously gathered data to examine the effects of employment on recidivism and created three agree–disagree questions to investigate how family ties affected post-release depression: [the questions asked pertained to] (1) the perceived balance of exchange (i.e., whether or not the person felt like a burden on the family), (2) the degree to which the individual felt functionally integrated into the family (i.e., participated in important decisions), and (3) the degree of emotional support received from the family (i.e., whether he felt welcome at home). With these questions, Thomas (2014) stated that 84% of the interviewees reported feeling welcome at home.

Furthermore, 64% of the interviewees stated that they felt welcome at home and also reported feeling less depressed. In the end, the researchers found that release from prison often resulted in post-release depression. They proposed that family support networks are vital in influencing variations in post-release depression (Henry & Robert, 2016). In addition, when a former prisoner re-enters the family setting—where that person is not a burden—the probability of feeling depressed is diminished. The results were translated as indicating that the behavior that a former prisoner exhibits upon returning to his or her community with post-release depression largely depends on the availability of supportive family networks. Specifically, the researchers revealed that emotional support seemed to be more important in reducing post-release depression than involvement of the former prisoner in making family decisions. By questioning only former prisoners, Briney (2014) concluded that family members are important supports of former prisoners in becoming productive members of society.

A review of the literature by Gunnison & Helfgott (2013) examined the whereabouts of and impact of families on former prisoners within 35 days after being discharged. As the provided evidence has shown, the researcher conducted interviews 7 times with 49 prisoners (33 males and 16 females), 75% of whom had been convicted of a drug-sale or drug-possession offense. It was found that 82% of the released prisoners were residing with a relative, spouse, or partner within 2 days after release. Further, the families of returning former prisoners played the foremost role in determining their triumph or failure within 1 month of release. Interactions between former prisoners and their families were composed of such activities as sharing family meals. Almost half also

received some financial support from their families. Even though in some cases they were poor, family members kept money from—or limited the extent of their monetary contributions to—former prisoners to put off their participation in substance abuse (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013).

Regarding the former prisoners' assessments of family support, Bahr (2015) reported that family involvement can be a deciding factor in how successfully a former prisoner reenters society. The research speculated that 'people with strong supportive families are more likely to succeed than those with weak or no family support... [and] that self-defined family support was the strongest predictor of individual successes. Despite the fact that family members were not interviewed, the researcher also emphasized that acceptance and support from families were the most important incentives for former prisoners to participate in positive lifestyles. Although the Bahr (2015) findings was limited to examining the effect of families on former prisoners' return within 35 days, the magnitude of family support was clear from the results. In similar research, Johnson (2013) established that former prisoners had lofty expectations of receiving family support and that families often met— and even went beyond—the former prisoners' expectations. This work strengthened the idea that family members make available support in a number of respects, and that the trade of support is essential to both the former prisoner and the family.

Focusing on African American male's transitions from prison to home; Johnson (2013) explored the experiences of 11 formerly incarcerated African American males who had been discharged from correctional facilities. This qualitative study focused on

the experiences of former prisoner's reentry pathways since being released from prison. As far as influential support was concerned, the researcher observed that upon their return, the former prisoners felt pressured to donate to their families. Further, because the former prisoners did not have many skills and did not have many opportunities to make considerable financial contributions, they returned to crime.

In addition, many prisoners shared that their parents had attempted to encourage values that were too demanding (e.g., emphasis on an employment ethic or going to school). In addition, their parents kept them out of decisions, such as those related to moving to a new location. A major barrier to successful reentry was the former African American male prisoners' steady attraction to peers in the community. As a result of the interviews, Johnson (2013) revealed that healthy relationships (i.e., with family and others) were crucial to former prisoners' ability to grow emotionally and detach themselves from previous dilemmas.

The findings from this study indicated that an empowerment framework incorporating community, residence, employment, relationships, and personal development can help to heal damaged relationships and lessen the transition from prison back into mainstream society (Johnson, 2013). In conclusion, Johnson (2013) found that social support systems for former African American male prisoners would be more efficient when combined with living in a halfway house. Moreover, the researchers felt that immediate reentry into the family was not advantageous for former prisoners. Additionally, they asserted that, regardless of the intensity of family support former

prisoners receive, unless they also acquire employment skills and take part in prerelease interventions, such support only delays an inevitable return to prison (Johnson, 2013).

Family Members' Point of View

In another study, Visher, Lattimore, Barrick, & Tueller (2016) examined data from 247 family members of former male prisoners returning to their families in Chicago. The researchers studied the types of support that family members provided to former inmates and the social support systems that families used for themselves. Of the participating families, 83% provided the former prisoner with monetary support, 76% allowed the individual to reside with the family, and 40% helped the former prisoner locate housing.

Voorhis and Salisbury (2016) suggested the concept of a 'family strengths' perspective, arguing that the family can provide a critical avenue of support for former prisoners. The authors pointed out that the former prisoners have redesigned their lives while in prison and that the families of returning prisoners have restructured their lives while in prison. In addition, families receiving former prisoners upon reentry have changed their family patterns. As a result, when a former prisoner returns, all individuals involved must reassess how to interact and reside together (Voorhis & Salisbury 2016).

Weiland (2016), in his brief review of former prisoner–family relationships, pointed to the critical nature of these relationships in post-release success in terms of staying away from illegal behavior and recidivism. Although her examination of literature concerning family support for returning former prisoners was short, she noted that when family visits to prison were restricted, the level and type of family relationships

created on the outside were deeply affected. Furthermore, she declared that most of the prisoners released from prison today go back into the community without meaningful support from their families, as family members are often not willing to resolve conflicts with former prisoners. Wieland (2016) gave a specific remedy suggesting that if a former prisoner does not have family support, the probability of his or her staying crime-free in the community almost certainly decreases to near zero.

Walker (2016) noted that family and social support systems are vital to the current existence of individuals in society because they impact their feelings of self-worth and self-esteem on a daily basis. When family and social support systems are lacking, individuals begin to withdraw from society, as well as from the pursuit of ongoing endeavors intended to allow for personal or professional growth. Kirk (2016) examined the issue of ex-convict reentry into society and provided evidence that when formerly incarcerated persons are integrated back into society, they often return to the same locales where they resided prior to incarceration. Unfortunately, this return also includes reestablishing relationships with former criminal types and family members who may have somehow contributed to the individual's incarceration.

When this is the case, the likelihood of the individual failing to change his or her life is high, as is the recidivism rate (Fleury-Steiner & Longalez, 2013). The authors argued that the way out of this situation is to ensure that there is a family intervention awaiting the ex-offender. In this type of intervention, the entire family changes its approach toward living and begins working to support one another toward positive change. Positive change can include any aspect of life that could potentially assist the

family in growth such as the pursuit of education, obtaining employment, or locating housing. For example, a change in attitude might involve a family case manager who assists the family so that its members see the family not as a cluster of problems, but as a cluster of potential resources. This attitude recognizes the principle that families are in it for the long haul, as opposed to short-term government services and interventions (Mowen & Visher, 2016).

Another means of changing attitudes that can occur with the help of a case manager involves family members being assisted in identifying and reducing family stressors (i.e., lack of employment) that are shown to lead to increased drug use and criminal activity. For instance, if a parolee is living with a family member, contact with the family case manager may help prevent conflict from developing into larger problems that might put at risk the family's current living arrangement (Bahr, 2015). Petersilia (2009) stipulated that family and social support systems might not exist for those who were once incarcerated because often, prior to incarceration, the ex-offender repeatedly abused the members of the support system. Such abuse often includes lying, theft, asking for recurring favors, and depleting financial resources. Thus, formerly incarcerated African American male ex-offenders may struggle to re-establish family and social support systems after their release (Petersilia, 2009). Instead of neighborhoods functioning as positive supports to families, they are often a threat to the well-being of the children of the formerly incarcerated. Without assistance, the family of the ex-offender, based on attitudes held by the family, may continue to impede the ex-offender's ability to alter his or her life (Crow & Smykla, 2013).

Homsley (2013) argued that organizational family support provides a sense of family to individuals and offers a similar positive impact on people to the traditional family support system. Some of the ways in which the organization provides a sense of family are instrumental (i.e., providing actual aid and programs), informational (i.e., communicating what resources are available), and emotional (i.e., acknowledging an employee's non-work needs). Homsley (2013) contended that in addition to the traditional family support that should exist for individuals, the family support structure that can be provided by organizations is vital for the continued growth of the individual. Strong social bonds of the modern day (i.e., marriage, stable employment, advanced levels of education) are thought to be crucial for successful prisoner reintegration (Martinez, & Abrams, 2013).

Research also suggests that strong social bonds may have a harmful impact on perceptions of shame (Schlager, 2013). Schlager (2013) found that 'belonging' is aversive to assuming a stigmatized identity, which is characterized by social dismissal and marginalization. Martinez & Abrams (2013) speculated that the essence of stigmatization appears to be interpersonal disassociation and that people are stigmatized to the scope that they possess characteristics that lead others to avoid, shun, reject, or ostracize them. Thus, the literature indicates that if a former prisoner has strong prosocial bonds, they may function as a protective mechanism of sorts that mitigates his or her feelings of being stigmatized by mainstream society (Schlager, 2013).

Substance Abuse

Over the last three decades, we have seen a meteoric rise in the number of Americans serving time in prison (Pfaff, 2017). The most recent figures put 2.2 million Americans behind bars, and the number is increasing. At least 95% of state prisoners will be discharged at some point in their lives (Hernandez, 2013). Of these, roughly two-thirds will be arrested again. Davis (2017) emphasized that comprised that African American males comprised an abundant growing population in the U.S. correctional programs. At the yearend 2010, black non-Hispanic males had an imprisonment rate (3,074 per 100,000 U.S. black residents) that was nearly seven times higher than white non-Hispanic males (459 per 100,000) (Glover, 2014). Problems with substance abuse and addiction for ex-offenders make the path difficult regarding successful integration into society (Jonson & Cullen, 2015). Making this crisis worse is the deficiency of treatment options both inside of prison and outside after release. Essentially, combined with other difficulties of reintegration—such as finding jobs and housing—the lack of treatment or services sets up inmates for failure (Seim, 2016).

Of the 2 million people behind bars in this country, roughly 20% of these inmates are imprisoned on a drug-related offense, such as selling or possession (Hinton, 2017). This certainly does not tell the entire story of addiction's true impact on the criminal justice system (Mallea, 2014). In his literature, Walter (2013) found that for the large majority of African American male inmates—as well as for former inmates and parolees—substance abuse and addiction played a significant role in their lives and in the crimes they committed. In addition to buying and selling illegal substances, many

offenders committed their crimes while under the influence, stole money or goods to buy additional drugs, drove drunk, and/or acted violently because of their addiction (Walter, 2013). Overall, drugs and alcohol were involved in the crimes of 81% of state prison inmates (Walter, 2013). Alcohol is most closely connected with criminal behavior. The number-one crime in America directly associated with substance abuse is drunk driving.

Alcohol is also connected to a number of other crimes (Hari, 2016). Among state prison inmates convicted of a violent crime, 21% revealed that they were under the influence of alcohol at the time of their crime. They also shared that they had no other substances involved. This movement continues while they are behind bars, as 26% of inmates convicted of a violent offense committed another violent crime in prison while under the influence of alcohol alone. Further, of all adults arrested, 14% were plagued with an alcohol addiction at some point in their lives, and 10% were addicted at the time of their arrest (Carson, 2014).

Illegal drugs also play a major role in initiating criminal behavior. Estimates show that almost half (49%) of state inmates convicted of a violent offense committed the crime while under the influence of one or more drugs (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2016). The issue is even more pronounced for property crime, which is committed by a number of those with drug problems to produce money to purchase drugs. Two-thirds of adults arrested for property crimes test positive for at least one drug. Many exhibit dependence on at least one substance, most commonly alcohol, cocaine, crack, or heroin.

In fact, 17% of all inmates claim to have committed their crime solely to obtain money to buy drugs (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2016). Spending on the criminal justice

system has increased alongside the prison population during the past 25 years (Maella, 2014). In 2015, state spending on corrections totaled \$38 billion. In 1986, the total was just \$15 billion, adjusted for inflation (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). This speaks for the fastest growing part of most state budgets, vastly eclipsing Medicaid. Branson (2016) estimated that 80% of that money (\$30.4 billion) was spent specifically on inmates who committed a crime while under the influence to raise money to support their habit or who committed any drug- or alcohol-related offense. In regard to the history of drug laws, the first American antidrug law was an 1875 law that outlawed opium dens, not the importation or use of opium in other forms. Before 1907, one could buy or sell drugs just like any other consumer good. The Food and Drug Act of 1906 was an effort to prevent the mislabeling or misbranding of foods or drugs. By 1935, 36 states had ordinances regulating the use, sale, or possession of marijuana (Branson, 2016).

President Nixon declared a 'War on Drugs' in 1971 (Frydl, 2013). The President introduced stronger criminal penalties for drug dealers that suggested a rapid expansion of drug treatment facilities. Then, in 1982, President Reagan called for an increase of the War on Drugs. This included the Reagan administration ending the support of existing institutions and sending mentally challenged patients onto the street. Reagan's decisions in 1982 were followed with the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1985, which elevated drug sentences and enacted mandatory sentencing guidelines. During this time, only about 10% of the major illicit drugs smuggled into the United States were interdicted, and drug-related emergency room visits and drug-related arrests continued to increase (Frydl, 2013).

As a result, the prison populations expanded due to drug-related crimes (Hinton, 2017). Estimates show that arrests for drug law violations was 1,579,566 in 2010, which was equal to an arrest every 20 seconds (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). Of the 1,579,566 arrests in 2010, 646,042 were for possession alone. This averaged to 648 persons per day being arrested (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). In essence, the War on Drugs created a new criminal justice problem rather than addressing a community or health issue (Branson, 2016).

The 2015 Annual Report to Congress on substance abuse treatment programs in the nation's federal prisons revealed that the Federal Bureau of Prisons reported that 50 of the Bureau's prisons had a residential drug abuse treatment program where inmates lived together in a separate unit of the prison that was reserved for drug abuse treatment. In fiscal year 2015, more than 16,000 inmates participated in the in-prison residential drug abuse treatment programs, and more than 13,000 participated in community transition drug abuse treatment. Thorough analysis of these programs by the Bureau of Prisons and the National Institute on Drug Abuse revealed that they can make a significant positive difference in the lives of inmates following their release from prison, as participants in these programs were considerably less likely to use drugs or be rearrested compared to other inmates who never took part in the treatment programs (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2016).

In 2011, there was a Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities on prisoners' prior use of, dependence on, and abuse of illegal drugs. The survey included questions connected with the trends in levels of drug use, type of drugs

used, and treatment reported by state and federal prisoners since the last national survey was conducted in 2004. The report also represented measures of dependence and abuse by gender, race, Latino origin, and age. It made available data on the levels of prior drug use (i.e., with an in-depth look at methamphetamine use), dependence, and abuse by selected characteristics, such as family background, criminal record, type of drug used, and offense (Kinner & Rich, 2018). Highlights of the research included the following: among drug dependent or abusing prisoners, 40% of state and 49% of federal inmates took part in drug abuse treatment or programs since admission to prison; among both state and federal prisoners, White inmates were at least 20 times more likely than Black inmates to report recent methamphetamine use; and violent offenders in state prisons (50%) were less likely than drug (72%) and property (64%) offenders to have used drugs in the month prior to their offense (Kinner & Rich, 2018).

A number of prohibitions have been designed to punish drug offenders, creating ‘a situation whereby a three-time armed robber can be released from prison and immediately qualify for welfare benefits and public housing, benefits that would be denied to a single mother who engaged in a one-time drug sale’ (Singleton, 2017). Without receiving substance abuse treatment while incarcerated and support and supervision upon reentry, an ex-offender is likely to return to using drugs. About 50% of all inmates were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of their offense; of these, about 1 in 6 also reported that the primary motivation for their most recent criminal offense was to support their drug use (Surprenant, 2017). Given the substantial costs associated with imprisoning inmates and keeping them separate from community,

work, and family life, would it not be prudent for prisons to release inmates who are better off than when they entered?

Whereas prisons generally provide inmates with some degree of education and work experience, jails are much less likely to provide such rehabilitative programs, which leave jail conditions to vary dramatically across jurisdictions. Moreover, though most prisons offer educational programs, substance abuse treatment or vocational training opportunities for inmates, participation in such programs is low and has been declining (Hilinksi-Rosick & Walsh, 2016). The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (NCASA, 2012) conducted a study in 2010 titled “Behind Bars II: Substance Abuse and America’s Prison Population,” which revealed that the explosion in American’s prison population—between 1996 and 2006, the number of inmates in state, federal and local prisons tripled, from 500,000 to 2.2 million—was due overwhelmingly to criminal activity linked to drug and alcohol abuse (NCASA, 2012). The study disclosed that drug and alcohol abuse and addiction are implicated in the incarceration of 84.8%—1.9 million—of the 2.2 million men and women behind bars today.

Among the 1.9 million substance-involved inmates are parents of 2.2 million children, many of them minors. Finally, the report, being the result of 10 years of work, uncovered that in 2006, \$70 billion taxpayer dollars were spent to imprison individuals who have a history of drug or alcohol abuse and addiction or are serving time for drug- or alcohol-related crimes and that alcohol is more closely associated with violent crime than any illegal drug (NCASA, 2012). Behind Bars II makes it known how substance abuse

and addiction have shaped the criminal histories of 80% of prisoners today: 81% of the 1.1 million state inmates, 0.2 million federal inmates, and 0.6 million local jail inmates dishonored drug or alcohol laws, were high on drugs at the time they committed their crimes, stole property to buy drugs, had a history of drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, or exhibited some combination of these characteristics (NCASA, 2012).

Currently, blacks make up 12.3 percent of the U.S. population; but comprise 41.0 percent of the inmate population; 60.2 percent have substance abuse disorders. Hispanics make up 14.8 percent of the U.S. population, but comprise 18.8 percent of the inmate population, and 58.3 percent have substance abuse disorders. Whites total 66.4 percent of the U.S. population, but comprise of 34.6 percent of the inmate population; 73.1 percent have substance abuse disorders (McKim, 2017). The NCASA (2012) examination documented the shattering impact of substance abuse on America's correctional systems: inmates who are alcohol and drug abusers and addicts are the most likely to be imprisoned—again and again—and the length of sentences increase for repeat offenders; the number one substance abuse crime in America is drunk driving (NCASA, 2012).

The report also revealed that inmates who are alcohol and drug abusers and addicts are the most likely to be repeatedly imprisoned. The more prior convictions a prisoner has, the more likely he or she is to be a drug abuser. In state prisons, 67.6% of first offenders have used drugs constantly, compared to 63% of inmates with two prior convictions and 81% of inmates with five or more prior convictions; 50% of state parole and probation violators were under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or both when they committed their new offense; state prison inmates with five or more prior convictions are

3 times more likely than first-time offenders to be regular crack users (NCASA, 2012).

Alcohol is more closely associated with crimes of violence than any other drug.

This drug is a bigger perpetrator in connection with murder, rape, assault, and child and spousal abuse than any illegal drug. Fifty-seven percent of state inmates incarcerated for violent crimes were under the influence of alcohol (and no other substance) when they committed their crime, compared to 3% under the influence of cocaine or crack alone and 1% under the persuasion of heroin alone. Violent crimes among jail inmates are also more closely connected to alcohol than to any other drug, with 25% of violent offenders having been under the influence of alcohol alone at the time of their crime versus 4% using crack or cocaine alone and not under the influence of heroin. In considering the increasing cost of incarcerating prisoners, McKim (2017) found that in 2015, federal, state, and local governments spent \$74 billion on incarceration, court proceedings, probation and parole for substance-involved adult and juvenile offenders.

Mental Health

Earlier in history, a person with mental illnesses life span was shorter than those without. In the period of the asylum and the mental hospital, contagious illness was the cause of most deaths (Collins, Drake, & Deacon, 2013). Although this condition improved in the 20th century with the arrival and use of antibiotics and antipsychotic medication, the end result continues to be that of a poorer quality. People with mental illness are now expiring earlier and in extraordinary numbers. The circumstances in America appear particularly bleak (Collins, Drake, & Deacon, 2013). In many developed

countries, the life expectancy distinction for the seriously mentally ill is reported to be 15 years; in America, it is 25 years (Collins, Drake, & Deacon, 2013).

The mental hospitals have been cleared out—less than 50,000 people remain in U.S. state mental hospitals, a remarkable reduction from 550,000 persons who were in the hospitalized in the 1950s prior to the French invention and introduction of the first antipsychotic medication, chlorpromazine. In America, as in many other countries, we have seen the materialization of what might be termed ‘simple solutions,’ which are frequently designed to help persons with mental illness but may have unexpected consequences (Bishop, Seirup, Pincus, & Ross, 2016). Close the hospitals and use the monies which are saved to build up community facilities (Bishop, Seirup, Pincus & Ross, 2016)—this was the recommendation of the reform movement. Often with little preparation, hospitals were closed and patients were released to community treatment. Many patients had a very difficult time locating the necessary facilities and services. Protecting the patient’s right to privacy has been another subject (Shen & Snowden, 2014).

In recent years, there has been an increase in red tape to protect patients’ confidential information. Persons with mental illness who become severely ill and are taken to the nearest hospital are often treated without data about their medical history from a consolidated patient record (Gumber & Stein, 2013). Electronic consolidated medical records, made possible by the computer revolution, have not arrived in some countries. Another issue is the lack of continuous care. Persons with mental illness sometimes are treated for years by the same clinician (Whitley & Henwood, 2014).

Brief interviews are unsatisfactory to understand and determine the multifaceted problems of persons with mental illness. A 50-minute session is not nearly enough time to explore the unexpected changes and complications of a person with mental illness. Identifying the diagnosis or diagnoses and recommending a medication or medications often will not be sufficient. We have known for years that people with mental illness often need compounded and sometimes lengthy educational and rehabilitation programs (Herman, 2014). As hospitals have been scaled back or closed, many of the mentally ill have been ‘transinstitutionalized’ to prison, where an estimated 200,000 now reside (Schug & Fradella, 2014). Prisons, like psychiatric hospitals, are often sites of trauma and life-shortening infection. Hepatitis, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases have high rates of frequency in such institutions. They are learning institutions for antisocial behavior for many of the imprisoned. In recent years in many American cities, minor violations of the law such as not paying a transit fee, which previously would have resulted in a small fine, can now result in police arrest. Persons with mental illness who do not possess proper social skills, such as skills in how to talk politely with authorities, may often be arrested, adjudicated, and incarcerated. As the mental hospitals were emptied, mortality rates rose (Schug & Fradella, 2014).

Penal Institutions: America’s Leading Psychiatric Services

According to data collected in 2002 and 2004 from local, state, and federal correctional facilities, a quarter of inmates nationwide had a history of chronic mental illnesses like schizophrenia, bipolar illness, and depression (Slate & Buffington-Vollum, 2013). Statistics show only one in three were receiving medication for their illness at the

time of their being taken into custody, this number escalated to nearly two-thirds during incarceration (Montross, 2016). Estimates of the percentage of prisoners who have an acute psychiatric disorder have ranged from 8% to 17%. Lazar's 2009 study proposes that approximately 10% of prisoners who have severe psychiatric disorders are incarcerated in the nation's jails and prisons at any given time (Slate & Buffington-Vollum, 2013).

Hence, the nation's jails and prisons have become, de facto, the nation's principal psychiatric hospitals. There are now more acutely mentally ill individuals in the Los Angeles County Jail, Chicago's Cook County Jail, or New York's Rikers Island Jail than there are in any one psychiatric hospital in the world (Raphael & Stoll, 2013). And the costs of such imprisonment are enormous. According to the Department of Justice, it costs American taxpayers an astounding \$16 billion per year to accommodate individuals with psychiatric disorders in jails and prisons (\$50,000 per person annually; 300,000 incarcerated individuals with mental illness). A quick view of these costs is astonishing (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). The expense of incarcerated individuals with acute psychiatric disorders is twice as high as the cost of aggressive community treatment programs, which are some of the most effective plans to treat the severely ill (Jaffe, 2017).

Ford (2017) reviewed a study to look at the barriers hindering inmates' willingness to seek mental health services. The participants consisted of 418 incarcerated adult males who decided to take part in this study from three security levels (i.e., reception and diagnostic unit, minimum security, and maximum security). The participants filled out a three-page survey with questions about the use of mental health

services prior to and while incarcerated. The results of this study disclosed that 329 individuals who reported past community treatment were more likely than those who did not report any treatment to have voluntarily contacted mental health services while incarcerated; 77 with a past entailing community treatment voluntarily contacted prison mental health services; and 132 with such a past involving treatment did not voluntarily use services during their incarceration (Ford, 2017).

All things considered, many inmates remained hesitant to use available mental health services because of self-preservation concerns, procedural concerns, self-reliance, and professional service provider concerns (Jaffe, 2017). Inmates with a past involving community-based treatment tended not to self-refer and therefore were not likely to be forthcoming about their problems. And inmates without a past including mental health treatment either in the community or while incarcerated possessed greater self-preservation concerns and self-reliance than inmates with past treatment experience. Results of this study specify five crisis areas for which inmates may ask for mental health service: behavioral dyscontrol, physical health concerns, negative affect, interpersonal relationships, and institutional relations. There are four potential barriers to inmates' willingness to seek mental health service: self-preservation concerns, procedural concerns, self-reliance, and professional service provider concerns (Jaffe, 2017). Results further indicate that inmates with a history of mental health treatment in the community were more likely than inmates without such a history to seek help for negative affect or interpersonal relationships while incarcerated (Ford, 2017). Furthermore, inmates with a history of community treatment who had not willingly contacted mental health services

while incarcerated supported significantly larger self-reliance, self-preservation concerns, and procedural concerns as barriers to service utilization. Finally, inmates with a history of being ordered to seek services, regardless of the setting, revealed more self-preservation concerns about prison mental health services and preferred to depend on their own resources for dealing with mental health problems (Ford, 2017).

Another study reviewed by Torrey (2013) investigated jail stays in a group of persons with schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders who underwent their first hospital admission and who were participating in the Suffolk County Mental Health Project. The study was composed of 580 first-admission respondents diagnosed as meeting DSM-IV criteria for having schizophrenia, psychotic mood disorders, or other psychotic disorders. The first set of interviews occurred in the hospital; face-to-face follow-ups occurred at the 6-, 24-, and 48-month points, and telephone contact was maintained every 3 to 6 months. The results showed that 47 respondents (9%) were incarcerated over a follow-up period and that among them, 20 were incarcerated several times (Torrey, 2013).

The most significant forecasters of jail stay and time to incarceration during the follow-up were being male or Black and having been imprisoned prior to admission. The results indicate a need for mental health care professionals to assess, routinely document, and collaboratively address incarceration history, especially when working with Black males, in an effort to avoid future incarceration (Torrey, Zdanowicz, Mennard, Lamb, Biasotti, & Fuller, 2014). Morgan, Morgan, Valuri, Ferrante, Castle, & Jablensky (2013) highlighted the results of a survey by Mallik-Kane & Visser of 1,100 returning prisoners

in the month before release. They found that 15% of men and 35% of women reported having been diagnosed with a mental health and substance abuse condition. Additionally, they discovered that about six in ten men and women with mental health or substance abuse conditions received treatment during prison, meaning that about four in ten did not. The researchers concluded that without help, those who have mental illness or substance abuse are unable to transition with ease to the outside world. Usually, lack of health insurance presents a barrier to continuous care for returning prisoners with mental illness or drug abuse issues. Although respondents with both conditions were more likely than others to have insurance shortly after release, a large majority was uninsured (Hall, Wooten, & Lundgren, 2016). In addition, returning prisoners with mental health and substance abuse conditions faced many health and reentry challenges upon release.

Morgan et al. (2013) noted that prisoners with mental health and substance abuse conditions were heavy users of health services after release, but the information suggested that they received fragmented, episodic care for acute problems. Eight to 10 months after release, 8 in 10 respondents with mental health and substance abuse conditions had received some health care in the community, but only one-half reported receiving treatment for both of their conditions. Individuals with both conditions were more likely than others to have used the emergency room for services and/or to have required hospitalization. Morgan et al. (2013) concluded that most returning prisoners have chronic health conditions requiring treatment or management.

The conclusion of the study revealed that 8 out of 10 men and 9 out of 10 women reported having at least one physical health, mental health, and substance abuse problem.

One-half of men and two-thirds of women reported physical health conditions. Fifteen percent of men and over one-third of women reported mental health conditions, and the actual prevalence is likely to be double these self-reported amounts. Furthermore, about two-thirds reported active substance abuse, not simply substance use, in the six months before this incarceration. Given the high frequency of these conditions, it is not sufficient to think of returning prisoners with health conditions as a special-needs population but, rather, as the norm. (Morgan et al., 2013).

Overall, Santos (2013) demonstrated how the transition from prison to the community presents unique challenges for individuals with health problems, and how the awareness of these challenges can be used to target interventions to improve reentry outcomes. Santos (2013) information also shed light on the importance of recognizing that returning prisoners frequently report multiple types of physical and mental health issues. Complete attention to a returning prisoner's health needs may require a cross-disciplinary approach. Given that health conditions influence reentry outcomes and that nearly all returning prisoners have health issues, assessing health needs should be part of each individual's reentry planning process, specifically keeping in mind the fact that a large majority of prisoners have mental illness (Hall, Wooten, & Lundgren, 2016). Once a reentering African American male prisoner's health needs have been identified, additional steps should be taken to improve health outcomes after release. Those who did not receive health services in prison should be educated about healthcare resources appropriate to their needs in the community. Without minimizing the various issues that all returning prisoners face, it is important to recognize the unstable degrees of difficulty

faced by returning prisoners with physical health, mental health, and substance abuse problems in an effort to develop targeted strategies for success (Rolle, 2015).

Social Identity and Reintegration

The culture maintained in a prison environment often teaches incarcerated persons coping and prison survival skills that are not necessarily productive outside of prison (Rocheleau, 2015). African American male ex-offenders may find it difficult to reintegrate into society because behaviors that might be adaptive in prison may have the opposite effect during reintegration into the society (Forbes & Kelley, 2016). The norms and knowledge of the antisocial subculture obtained from other inmates can create a new identity of self for novice inmates (Walters, 2016). A quantitative study of 148 inmates conducted by Walters revealed that incarceration reshapes the thinking and identities of inmates.

The reshaping of identities in prison is consistent with the conclusions of Galinsky, Wang, Whitson, Anicich, Hugenberg, and Bodenhausen (2013) that to identify with certain groups, some individuals will take possession of derogatory labels. Dominant groups impose the degrading labels to reinforce stigmatized groups. Galinsky et al. conducted a quantitative study to test the causes and consequences of self-labeling with a derogatory group label. The study revealed that individuals perceived that acceptance of the self-label of being in a derogatory group, such as prison gangs, demonstrated a sense of power over the stigma of the label and of being associated with the group. However, although self-labeling can weaken the stigmatizing force of the label, the sense of power can affect judgments (Galinsky et al., 2013).

Gavel & Mandracchia (2016) highlighted a quantitative study to examine social identity process in an institutional setting. The findings of this study were that the self-view of individuals on their identities could be affected by how they are viewed by those with whom they are familiar. The participants in the study were incarcerated male and female offenders in a medium security prison. In a total institution context, persons with whom the inmates were confined were relevant to their identity processes. The view of self that continues post-prison release can have an effect on how individuals reintegrate into society (Mitchell, 2016).

Effect of Imprisonment on Recidivism

Andrews (2016) stated that two poignant reasons for recidivism are the inability to obtain employment, and lack of social ties. Factors associated with the amount of time spent in prison also determine post-prison offending and incarceration. Prisonization, which is the failure to shed the learned behaviors and subculture of prison, can also result in recidivism (Frank & Gill, 2015). Prisonization explains why there is empirical regularity attesting to the cycle of ex-offenders returning to prison. Prisonization also elucidates how and why prisons serve as a degenerating stimulus, a school for crimes, and the high percentage of annual rearrests (Frank & Gill, 2015).

Literature by Singh, Kroner, Wormith, Desmarais, and Hamilton (2017) found that of the 404,638 state prisoners released in 2005 in 30 U.S. states, within 3 years 67.8% were rearrested and 76.6% within 5 years. According to Singh et al. (2017), individuals' social bonds diminish the longer they are removed from society. An analysis was conducted of 1,425 offenders released from a North Carolina prison and found that

there was a positive correlation between the number of years spent in prison and recidivism. Singh et al. (2017) stated that longer sentences result in decreased employment opportunities because of loss of contact with the job market. This loss reduces the chances of securing legitimate earnings. The inability to obtain employment often results in recidivism. However, Singh et al. (2017) concluded that the effects of longer sentences on recidivism are complex and varies based on the specifics of the ex-offender.

Meade, Steiner, Makarios, and Travis (2012) conducted a quantitative post-release study of 1,989 offenders in the state of Ohio. The authors focused on the relationship between the length of incarceration and the odds for reoffending during the year following release. Meade et al. (2012) found that the odds to re-enter prison lowered for former inmates who had spent longer periods in prison. When the amount of time served in prison was more than 2 years, the odds of recidivism decreased. However, there was only a significant difference in the odds of offenders reoffending when the time served was five years or more. Meade et al. (2012) noted that one explanation for the difference in the odds could be due to the incapacitation of inmates during their prime years. These odds may also have an effect on the post-prison experiences of African American male ex-offenders (Latessa & Listwan, 2014).

Reentry and Transition

The enormous increase in America's prison population has had one convincing consequence—more people than ever before are being discharged from prison to return home (Johns, 2015). Research indicates that federal and state prisons release nearly

700,000 offenders into local communities each year (Alessandro, 2017). In addition, approximately 1,900 offenders are released into the community each day (Alessandro, 2017). According to Childs (2015), within three years, almost 7 out of 10 released African American males go back to prison after being released into the community. This section will focus on the theory and practice associated with reintegration and some of the successful programs that have assisted formerly incarcerated individuals in becoming productive members of mainstream society.

Reentry and Its Issues

Reintegration (or *re-entry*, as it is sometimes called) is both an event and a process (Mears & Cochran, 2014). Narrowly speaking, re-entry comes the day a prisoner is released from confinement. Mears and Cochran (2014) stipulated that, in its own way, the time (or timing) of a prisoner's release offers problems and issues that may or may not be supervised by corrections officials or criminal justice agents. For instance, shortly before he became better known, the cult leader Charles Manson was an average prisoner being released from San Quentin into the San Francisco Bay area. In one version of the events of this day Manson hitched a ride just outside the gates of the prison from a delivery truck driver who almost immediately offered him a marijuana cigarette. Manson, not unreasonably, was startled that drugs were so readily available so close to the prison and wondered what was happening to the society that had kept him in isolation for a significant amount of time (Guinn, 2013).

Other, less infamous ex-offenders inform us of similar stories of being transported from a prison to an inner-city bus station in the middle of the night, with \$40 in gate

money, nowhere to go, and no one except drug dealers waiting for them in the station. Further, re-entry is also a long-term process, one that actually begins before release and continues long afterward. Basically, this means that re-integration involves everything – from literacy instruction to electronic monitoring—that is intended to diminish recidivism after release from prison. As such, public and governmental concentration on successful re-entry has been going on for some time (Buckner, 2015).

Gaskew (2014) argued the need for the creation of new and innovative prison-to-community transition initiatives for an individual who is trying to make an effort toward desistance, otherwise these obstacles might lead to the black counter-cultural ‘merry-go-round’ that continues to exist that thousands of African American males find themselves on why preparing to reenter into their perspective communities each year (Gaskew, 2014, p. 14). In regard to reintegration, in some cases, the job of preparing inmates for return to the community has generally been delegated to institutional corrections (Middlemass, 2017). In some systems, this function is shared with parole agents, although their interaction with offenders before release is usually limited to one meeting. The general intent of this meeting is to center on aspects of the inmate’s plans that can help the representative monitor conformity with release conditions (Lutze, 2014). In practice, transitional services provided by prison or parole staff often amount to helping the inmate draft a ‘paper plan’ for his or her return to the community. Detailed and realistic discharge planning is left to the African American male offender, who must find housing and a steady job while reconnecting to family and other social connections under a new, crime-free identity. The indirect assumption is that offenders can comfortably make these

preparations from their prison cells, build upon the lessons they learned from incarceration, and eagerly pick up whatever positive pieces they left behind (Trega, 2014).

Transitional Programs and Their Success

Reentry usually involves an integrated and comprehensive approach to case management and is often aimed at providing the life skills necessary for the offenders to become law-abiding citizens and succeed in the community. Among those programs utilized in assisting individuals in the process of re-entering society are substance abuse rehabilitation, vocational training, prerelease programming, life skills training, and employment programs (Mears & Cochran, 2014). One program that assists ex-offenders and has been successful is the Support and Training Result in Valuable Employees program, known as STRIVE Boston, a nonprofit job-readiness program that helps ex-offenders and other jobless hard-to-place individuals locate jobs and remain employed. STRIVE unites attitudinal adjustment, education and job training, support services, placement assistance, and long-term follow-up to reach its goals (Strive, 2014).

STRIVE Boston's Ex-Offender Program targets male and female ex-offenders, 18 and older, who are willing to participate in a 5-week intensive training program in Boston. STRIVE chooses applicants who will benefit from STRIVE training and are likely to stay employed after they find a job. The program is free. Specifically, STRIVE Boston's ex-Offender Program consists of a 5-week intensive professional development training course, followed by job placement assistance and 2 years of follow-up support. The professional development training includes the following: attitudinal adjustment;

how to follow instructions and accept criticism; how to work as part of a team; how to speak, dress, and behave professionally in a work environment; job readiness skills; resume writing and job applications; practice interviews; telephone skills; GED program; and computer classes (Strive, 2014).

After the training, a STRIVE placement specialist assists in matching the ex-offender with the right job and employer. However, the ex-offenders have to apply for jobs on their own. STRIVE gives suggestions and coaching during the application and interview process (Strive, 2014). Next, there is a program known as The Safer Foundation, located in Chicago. This organization helps formerly incarcerated individuals re-enter their communities. For more than 30 years, Safer has been working to reduce recidivism by assisting people with records to attain employment and social services (Safer Foundation, 2014). In 1972, the biggest hindrance to employment for ex-offenders was the shame attached to being an individual with a criminal record. Today, these individuals face additional, important barriers to employment such as lack of education, substance abuse issues, and little to no experience with the work world. At the same time, communities face considerable increases in the number of returning individuals with a criminal record, with approximately 700,000 people being discharged from U.S. prisons on a yearly basis (Forbes & Kelley, 2016).

The goal of the Safer Foundation is to prepare individuals with a criminal record for the world of work and then help them find and keep significant employment through a full range of employment services. Further, Safer clients often require additional programs and services to be equipped for employment, such as housing, substance abuse

treatment, education, and life skills development. Over the years, the Safer Foundation has created a range of programs and services in reaction to the changing needs of its clients (Safer Foundation, 2014). In 1976, the Safer Foundation expanded service delivery into Rock Island, Illinois, based on the need for services in that area of the state.

In 1978, Governor Robert Ray of Iowa personally requested Safer to deliver services to Iowa parolees and probationers in Davenport, Iowa, when he found out that many were seeking Safer's services across the border in Illinois. That same year, the Safer Foundation decided to function and administer a 60-bed residential work release facility on behalf of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). Today, the Safer Foundation—the only nonprofit private organization to administer adult transition centers for IDOC—provides secured oversight and services to over 500 males in two residential facilities located on the west side of Chicago (Safer Foundation, 2014).

The reason for these centers is to give individuals who are preparing to be released from Illinois supervision the support and services they need to re-establish necessary ties to family, employment, and community in order to be productive and crime-free. This past year, the Safer Foundation established a Public Policy and Advocacy Program to supplement direct client services (Safer Foundation, 2014). The focus of this initiative is to identify and reduce system-wide barriers to employment through broad-based coalition building and advocacy. For the past 30 years, the Safer Foundation has attracted a broad base of funding and support from individuals, private foundations, and the public sector. Safer also receives numerous requests from national, state, and local governmental officials seeking Safer's expertise regarding policies and

programs that promote the successful re-entry of individuals with a criminal record to the community so as to reduce recidivism rates, increase public safety, and enhance the likelihood of crime-free self-sufficiency for individuals with a criminal record and their families (Safer Foundation, 2014).

Lastly, there is the program known as CEO, located in New York City. CEO's signature transitional work program offers participants immediate paid employment. This time-limited program follows pre-employment training and equips participants with skills and practice indispensable to efforts to gain permanent employment (CEO, 2014). Participants work on one of CEO's 35–40 worksites throughout New York City, in crews of 5–9 CEO participants with a CEO-employed supervisor. The crews supply minor repair, maintenance, grounds-keeping, and janitorial work for public agencies that pay for these services. During transitional work, participants sometimes experience, for the first time in their lives, what it means to be capable of doing the following: getting to work on time; taking direction from a supervisor; being an appreciated worker; working steadily throughout the day; and expressing themselves to their supervisor and coworkers effectively and respectfully (CEO, 2014).

As a result of such experiential learning, participants start to change their workplace behavior and become ready for the private workforce. CEO participants stay on transitional jobs for an average of 2 months before being placed in full-time work. CEO began as a demonstration project of the Vera Institute of Justice in the 1970s to deal with employment barriers facing the formerly incarcerated following release (CEO, 2014). In 1996, CEO became an independent nonprofit organization providing

comprehensive employment services to people just released from New York State prisons and detention facilities. In 10 years as an independent nonprofit, CEO made 10,000 job placements for formerly incarcerated persons into full-time employment. CEO upholds the merit of being the only organization in New York City to offer immediate employment during the vital first days after release from jail and prison. Among CEO's main strengths are its unending relationships with other organizations in the criminal justice, workforce development, and social service fields (CEO, 2014).

Summary

A critical review of those issues affecting the formerly incarcerated African American male offender provides evidence that certain elements can have a profound impact upon reentry (Ragland, 2014). A combination of those primary issues of employment, housing, and social support, alongside the pursuit of higher education, could make life very difficult for a formerly incarcerated person (Lattimore & Visser, 2015). First, there is the primary issue of employment, where the formerly incarcerated person is often denied work outside of the prison system because employers are afraid that the individual will commit crimes once again. Second is the issue of housing, which is the formerly incarcerated person's first concern upon reentry. Initially, such individuals are often homeless and have nowhere to go. Only one-third are released, return to their community, and can reside with family (Mezheritsky, 2017).

For most, even though it is not the most urgent issue, housing is a problem that definitely has an impact on the formerly incarcerated being successful. They are first denied public housing and then are often restricted by federal, state, and local laws that

prevent them from living in the communities they are returning to (Williams, 2016).

Third is the primary issue of social support. Compared to the first two issues, this area is equally important, as it has been argued that family involvement can be a deciding factor in how successfully a formerly incarcerated person reenters mainstream society. Family and social support systems are vital; without them, the probability of the formerly incarcerated person staying crime-free in the community is little to none (Henry & Roberts, 2016).

This chapter has also addressed other issues that pose a challenge to the formerly incarcerated African American males. Initially, there is racial profiling, which is police-initiated action that relies on race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than on behavior (Chaney & Schwartz, 2017). In this case, officers take aim at minorities during their normal routines because they believe that minorities tend to commit the most crimes (Butler, 2017). Then there is alcohol and substance abuse, where 20% of inmates are imprisoned on a drug-related offense (Walters, 2013). And lastly, there is the issue of mental health, as prisons are known as the nation's leading psychiatric hospitals, with over half of inmates having a diagnosis. Once the mental institutions closed, the prison population exploded (Frazier, Hung-En Sung, & Alfaro, 2015).

It is now clear that all of these issues are important to the formerly incarcerated African American male offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations and must be addressed. It is essential that the African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations receive help in reentering society with as little difficulty as possible (Ragland, 2014). It is also vital that the African American male ex-offender with

a history of multiple incarcerations realize that he is capable of achieving his goals once released. The formerly incarcerated African American male offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations must know that it is worth it to overcome the various obstacles associated with reentry in an effort to succeed. If any of these systems are not addressed and are strained, the individual will inevitably return to a life of crime (Hottinger, 2015). An educational endeavor—whether vocational, secondary, or postsecondary—diminishes the issue of recidivism. It also increases an ex-offender’s self-worth and self-esteem. Lastly, if the goal of a formerly incarcerated African American male pursuing higher education is not supported, he will tend to discard other goals and return to a life that is not based on individual improvement but rather on a struggle for acceptance and the likelihood of reverting back to high risk behavior which will lead to criminal outcomes (Visher, Lattimore, Barrick, & Tueller, 2016).

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover and understand the essence of the post-prison lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations who have participated in a reentry program after having served time in a state/federal correctional institution in the southeastern region of the United States. This study was guided by two central questions: What are the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process the transition from prison back into the community? What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after release from prison, and the ability to reintegrate back into society? Six African-American male ex-offenders participated in semistructured interviews by sharing their experiences of reintegrating into society. An account of the challenges of the reentry process through their eyes helped explain the lived experiences of ex-offenders. This chapter includes a detailed discussion of the research method, the research design and rationale, methodology, target population and sample size, data collection and data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness.

Annually, over 700,000 individuals (or 1,700 a day) are released from state and federal prisons (Leary, 2011). When these ex-offenders return to the community, a great number of them experience dismissal from their families and friends, rejection from potential landlords, and intensive screening, specifically when it comes to employment and public housing (Crow & Smykla, 2013). While they are often overlooked by most of

society, some are scrambling to figure out how to stay out of prison, out of shelters, and on the road to a living a productive life. In recent years, many more ex-offenders return home and are often not prepared for life in mainstream society (Crow & Smykla, 2013).

A review of the literature showed that there is limited literature on firsthand experiences about the factors that determine success and failure for this group of men (Jones-Brown, Frazier, & Brooks, 2014). Using a phenomenological study, I collected and interpreted data from one-on-one, in-depth interviews to explore, based on their lived experiences, what these men perceived as the primary obstacles to reintegration in order to learn ways to reduce recidivism.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a framework for understanding the methodology for this study on reintegration. The procedures for a phenomenological design are reviewed. Methods of data collection and analysis are included. A summary of Chapter 3 outlined conclusions about the general methods used to collect and analyze data as described.

Research Design and Rationale

In order to explore, describe and understand the experiences of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations reintegrating into the community, a phenomenological design was employed. Phenomenology is a descriptive methodology that seeks to illuminate the meaning of lived experience for an individual or an explicit group of human beings about a concept or phenomenon. The phenomenological design views the life world as described by the subjects' intention and imagination in the world (Manen, 2014). Vagle (2014) described the primary purpose of

phenomenology as giving voice to the participants. The significance of using a phenomenological design was to discover the lived experience of the reentry process of this group of men in order to increase a broader understanding of the challenges of the reintegration phenomenon, as perceived by the special population of male ex-offender participants.

The participants in this study included a sample of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations that lived the experience of the reentry process. A phenomenological design allowed the researcher to have an open dialogue with the participants in a face-to-face interaction, ask pertinent questions related to the topic, find common themes among participants and make interpretations about the meaning of their experiences. Their unique thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences reflected their everyday lives as they adjusted to life in society after returning home from prison (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process the transition from prison back into the community?
2. What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after release from prison, and the ability to reintegrate back into society?

In this study, I limited the central phenomenon to African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations who have served more than 1 year in a southern state or federal prison, have committed felony offenses in South Carolina and

have been released from incarceration within the past 3-5 years. At this stage in the research, the perceptions of these men regarding the central phenomenon were referred to interchangeably as reintegration or reentry process. I proposed to identify the challenges they faced post-release, the strategies they used to rejoin society successfully, the motivators needed to abstain from crime and capture the meaning of their lived experiences.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to be the primary instrument by gathering data through one-on-one, in-depth interviews, using focused questions and continually making sure the data was sufficient to answer the research questions. My primary role in this study was to collect and interpret the data and analyze the information into themes. I have an ethical responsibility to conduct a self-evaluation of any preconceived ideas or unresolved issues with appropriate persons to effectively articulate the objective of the research. I was open and honest with participants regarding my role as the researcher. The individuals who were selected for this study have no personal or professional relationship with the researcher.

To eliminate bias and prejudice towards African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations and findings from this study, I bracketed (i.e., set aside) my assumption that most of these men face challenges on reentry to explore the phenomenon in terms of how it presents itself in the world of the participant. Since 2007, I have worked with male and female offenders within the correctional system of South Carolina. Having worked with male offenders could lead to certain opinions and

prejudices. I used bracketing to suspend any preconceived notions or personal biases that may influence what I heard the participants say. I planned on explicitly identifying any biases, values, and personal background such as gender, history, culture and socioeconomic status, which may affect my interpretation of participants' responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Finally, my role as researcher included that I become the collaborator with my research participants (Murchison, 2010; Yin, 2013). Since I seek to understand my research participants' lived experiences of the reentry process, my research participants were the experts whose knowledge I strived to acquire. By empowering my research participants in this fashion, I worked to remove any perceived power imbalance between me and my research participants (Patton, 2015).

Methodology

Selection of Participants

The topic and the research questions are the driving forces behind the selection of participants in a phenomenological inquiry (Englander, 2012). The knowledge that potential participants understand and can describe a phenomenon, from the viewpoint of their lived experience, must be the basis for the choice of participants. In other words, I had a sense of the expected boundaries of the phenomenon under study (Englander, 2012). Participants who had experience with the phenomenon were selected since they could offer a thorough, rich description of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). Their experience helped increase understanding of the phenomenon to describe their experiences regarding their transition from prison back into the society. The participants were African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations who have

experienced the phenomenon of transitioning back into society after being released from prison. All the participants met the criteria for the study and volunteered to participate in the interview process.

Recruitment of Participants and Sample Setting

To gain access to the target participants, permission was requested for access (see Appendix A) and the study was explained (see Appendix B) to the program director of the reentry residential transitional home. Prior to permission being granted, a letter of introduction and explanation of the study was e-mailed to the Program Director. In the letter of introduction, the researcher requested permission from the Program Director to set up a date to hold a group session to have the study explained to the program participants and to start the recruitment process. The program participants were asked to sign up on the voluntary informed consent form for face to face interview using a specialized issued code by the researcher only to be in the study.

I along with the program director of the reentry residential transitional home displayed a flyer in a public area that specifically explains the purpose of the study and the requirements to participate. The flyer was displayed for 2-4 weeks so that all qualifying residents of the reentry residential transitional home had the opportunity to volunteer to participate in the study. The flyer stated that all participation in the research is voluntary and the identity of all participants will be kept confidential. Additionally, the flyers provided the name and contact number of the researcher for residents to contact if they chose to participate in the study (see Appendix C).

In the reentry residential transitional home, the researcher left several copies of a release of information form along with several pre-addressed, stamped envelopes that could be mailed back to the researcher at no cost to the volunteers. The release of information form was thoroughly explained by me to the Program Director in case a resident needs assistance in filling out the form. The signed release of information form allowed the researcher to contact the transitional home Program Director so that certain demographic information can be cross-referenced from the volunteer's intake chart. Volunteers who refuse to sign a release of information or a legal form of consent did not incur any repercussions other than refusal to participate in the research study. The release of information and the legal form of consent was thoroughly explained to each volunteer by the researcher before he was allowed to participate in an in-depth interview. All qualifying volunteers agreed to participate in individual interview sessions before they were allowed to participate in the study.

The volunteers mailed a signed release of information form to the researcher to be considered for participation in the study. The volunteers were provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope to mail the signed release of information form to the researcher. The release of information form served to provide the researcher with the volunteer's information. I contacted the volunteers at the reentry residential transitional home in order to schedule a convenient date and time for their interview sessions. After the date was scheduled, each participant received an appointment from the researcher which detailed the exact date and time for the interview (see Appendix D). In addition, the interview sessions were conducted in a private interview room or office at the reentry

residential transitional home and lasted approximately 45 minutes each or until saturation occurs among the interviewees. During the active phase of the phenomenological study, I contacted the transitional homes' Program Director on a weekly basis to make sure there were no scheduling conflicts with the interviews.

The demographic information that was gathered from the release of information and consent forms of any volunteer who refuse to participate in the interview session was shredded and destroyed. The participants of the research study received an alphanumeric code from the researcher for the interview process in order to promote confidentiality. The alphanumeric code was placed on all forms, research notes, and transcripts in place of the participant's name. I kept a nonpublished master sheet that was used to cross-reference the participants' information in a fireproof, locked safe. After the study is completed, the Program Director will be given an analysis of the findings and a copy of my completed dissertation.

Sampling Strategy

The strategy for selecting participants for this study was purposive criterion sampling. Purposive sampling strategy is used in a study when participants meet the criteria for the study and have a unique and critical perspective on the phenomenon under investigation (Robinson, 2014). Criterion sampling provided an opportunity to attract participants that meet the pre-established criteria for the study (Suri, 2011). I used a purposive sample of released African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations in order to understand their perceptions about reentry. The purposive sampling method fits best with this researcher's purpose because the data

collected helped to explore the complex phenomenon of reintegration, as perceived by African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. This phenomenological study was supported by criterion sampling as well because all of the individuals possessed the pre-set criterion of having experienced the phenomenon of reentry.

Sample Size

Moustakas (1994) stated that sample size in a phenomenological inquiry tends to be small, and consists of prudently and purposively selected persons who have common experiences. The goal is to produce detailed patterns and descriptions of meaning. However, the sample size must be large enough to accomplish saturation. Saturation is achieved when no new ideas are presented in the data collection and analysis processes (Robinson, 2014). Consequently, no additional participants are needed or recruited when a thorough understanding of the phenomenon is accomplished (Robinson, 2014). In a phenomenological approach, the sample size is usually less than 12 participants (Pietkiewicz, & Smith, 2014). As Pietkiewicz & Smith (2014) argued, samples do not represent a population, but a perspective. In contrast to generalizing an entire population as in quantitative inquiries, the central goal in phenomenological studies is to concentrate on the lived experiences of a small sample of individuals who share similar experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The sample was drawn from the reentry residential transitional home in the southeastern region of South Carolina. All participants completed a screening questionnaire.

Inclusion Criteria

I used a sample size of 6 participants for this study. The criteria for participating in the research study was participants must (a) be African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations, (b) are English speaking, (c) who served more than 1 year in a southern state or federal prison, (d) have committed felony offenses in the south-eastern region of that state, (e) who are housed in a residential reentry center and (f) are not mentally unstable or cognitively impaired. All six ($N = 6$) participants were interviewed individually using the same set of semistructured open-ended interview questions (Appendix E) for approximately 45 minutes.

I met with the program director of the reentry residential transitional home to discuss the possible risks and benefits of the research study for its participants. Prior to conducting any research, I received a Community Partner agreement from the Program Director which allowed me to conduct the study utilizing clients from the reentry residential transitional home. I discussed the ethical standards of confidentiality with the Program Director and potential participants before conducting any research. All of the participants in this group of men who meet the aforementioned certain criteria and are residing in the transitional home located in the south-eastern region of South Carolina had the opportunity to volunteer to participate in this research study.

The researcher's recruitment goal is six participants in order to reach data saturation. Saturation is achieved when no new ideas are presented in the data collection and analysis processes (Robinson, 2014). Although Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston (2013) suggests that a sample size for phenomenology research of six participants can

reach data saturation, the sample size for this study will be six individuals as recommended by Klenke (2015). There are two criteria for enough: sufficiency and saturation of information (Dworkin, 2012; Siedman, 2013). Sufficiency indicates the researcher has enough participants to establish an adequate sample whereas saturation of information occurs when there is no new information (Dworkin, 2012; Suri, 2011). Data saturation depends on the nature of the data source; thus, purposeful data and precise questions will ensure saturation much quickly (Suri, 2011). Further, data should be sufficient to allow a comparison between dimensions and constructs and answer the research question (Suri, 2011). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), the researcher's personal lens may impact data saturation. Therefore, for the data to accurately reflect the participants lived experiences, I must be cognizant of their world view and personal lens to know when data saturation occurs (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

A sample of six participants enabled the researcher to gather descriptive information from the different men who represent this special population (Pietkiewicz, & Smith, 2014). Information collected from the participants interested in being in the study was demographic data such as age, religion, level of education, employment status prior to incarceration, marital status, number of children, number of times arrested, amount of time spent in prison, reason for incarceration, and number of times sentenced to prison. The screening questionnaire (Appendix F) assisted with ensuring that these participants satisfy the criteria for inclusion in the study. Participants met all the criteria for inclusion such as being currently involved in the programs provided by the reentry residential transitional home. Participants for this research project consisted of six ($N = 6$) African

American male participants with a history of multiple incarcerations in the southeastern region of South Carolina who are involved in the reentry residential transitional home programs. Residents of the reentry transitional home are accepted via referrals from every aspect of the court system ranging from diversion and alternative sentencing through probation and parole; thus around 75% of the residents come through the criminal justice system.

Instrumentation

The data collected to answer the research questions for this study were gained using the following research strategies. This section discussed how these methods were conducted and the purposes for which they were used for the study.

Interviews

I was the primary source of collecting information and analyzing data. I collected data through semistructured interviews. An audio tape recorder aided with important or key content obtained from participants during the interviews in order to gain as much data from interviews as possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). In the event participants do not consent to the audio recording of the interview, the participant was not allowed to participate in the research study.

Collections of information was through face-to face interviews. Interview questions were open-ended to avoid leading participants. The purpose of the interview questions was to directly obtain underlying information regarding each of the African American male ex-offender's with a history of multiple incarcerations experiences during the reintegration process. The questions were devised based on issues explored in the

limited body of existing literature on reentry and African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations and will be conceptualized to explore appropriate issues related to the research question-the experience of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations when they transition from prison back into society.

Interviews are necessary to understand behaviors that cannot be directly observed and allow for the interviewer and interviewees to engage in a conversation to uncover specific purposes of the research (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

This process uncovered participant viewpoints, feelings, emotions, and perspectives pertaining to the experience of reintegration. Again, the purpose here is to discover the process through which African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations experienced reintegration, rather than the outcomes of this event (Brinkman, 2013). The overarching research questions were: What are African American male ex-offender's experiences with a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process during the transition from prison back into the community? What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after their release from prison, and their ability to reintegrate back into society? The participants were asked to describe in detail the meaning of reentry from their perspective and lived experience according to the guided interview questionnaire (see Appendix E).

Interviews for this study are considered to be semistructured in form. That is, an interview guide with some predetermined questions will be utilized. Interview questions were open-ended and somewhat flexible, so that themes could be discovered and

expanded upon. This format was chosen primarily because of the likelihood that participants' responses would yield rich detailed information based on personal experiences. Perceptions cannot follow a predetermined format. Each of the respondents had unique experiences and life situations and define those with great variation (Olson, 2016). Some responses called for the interviewer to follow-up with probes and prompts (i.e., different sets of questions that may provoke reflections) to gain greater detail to tell that person's story and to illustrate her own personal experiences (Brinkman, 2013).

A semistructured format provided me with a tool for questioning to ensure that each interviewee was asked basically the same general questions. This format also served to assist the interviewees in remaining focused and on topic, but at the same time allowed for their perspectives to emerge (Seidman, 2013). Tracking information that was relevant to the research will be necessary in order to ensure research questions are answered. I predicted that some participants would be experiencing many feelings and emotions during the interview process, and they may need some assistance in staying on track and keeping to the subjects at hand.

With permission of the transitional home and of that of each interviewee, interviews were recorded for greater accuracy and detail during the data collection process. Prior to each interview, I read the informed consent form aloud to each of the potential participants who gave an interview. The potential participants were informed that they would be recorded and had to agree by signing the consent form. In addition, potential participants were informed that final consent is not necessary until after the

completion of the interview. Recorded interviews were required for the accuracy of the transcription process that would take place once interviews are completed.

In addition to observing, interviewing and journaling, I took detailed written field notes during the interviewing process. Field notes allowed me a method to capture and record aspects of the interview not expressed in words and any perceptions of the organization itself (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). For example, gestures and expressions of emotions (i.e., crying) were significant to record while participants answered questions. These observations allowed me to notice topics that seem important from an emotional perspective of the respondents. At the conclusion of the research interviews, I presented the participants with a reflective summation of the interview for confirmation of the participant's responses and to confirm that the participants said what was intended (Bruan & Clarke, 2013). Nvivo 12 Plus software aided with the analysis of data collected from participants to cluster themes, discover patterns or trends.

Journaling

A second method used to collect data was through journals. I kept a journal during the study to record any themes that emerged during the research process. This was helpful for coding purposes during the analysis stage of the study. The journal supported the recording of feelings/understandings that may have occurred as the research process continued (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Patton (2014) suggests five questions a qualitative researcher may answer during their personal journaling process:

- What do I know?
- How do I know what I know?

- What shapes and has shaped my perspective?
- With what voice do I share my perspective?
- What do I do with what I have found?

In addition, the journaling allowed me to document any impediments that were encountered during the data collection process. For instance, some examples of impediments can include difficulty in recruiting participants, turn-over rates of the residents, working around individual schedules and programming of the house, staff changes, and cancellation of house meetings. These types of difficulties and the steps taken to overcome these obstacles were also recorded (Patton, 2014).

Examining Records

The residents' files were examined under the supervision of the Program Director. This form of inquiry allowed me to document the past histories and background information of the participants, which offered another method to triangulate the data (i.e., see the validity section of this chapter). Records allowed me to gain certain types of data that could not be observed (e.g., mental health issues) or perhaps too sensitive (e.g., sexual abuse) to have been brought up in interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Items found in the participants files at reentry residential transitional home generally can include information regarding the crimes the men committed, arrests and sentencing records (i.e., pre-sentence investigation (PSI), and self-reports about school records. I created a Microsoft excel spreadsheet categorized all of the data that is retrieved from the participant's file.

Data collected from the house records were coded according to any themes that pertain to the literature on the concepts of labeling and stigma during their examinations. Records validated data that was gathered and recorded during the interviews. All notes were taken by hand using the field notes guide. I was not be allowed to copy or take any of these records. All of the data collected for this phase was done on site in the office where the records were stored (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Data Collection

This qualitative study implemented multiple methods of data collection (i.e., interviews, journaling and examining records) in order to increase the trustworthiness and integrity of results (Creswell, 2012). The research site for this study was a reentry residential transitional home which was located in southeastern region of South Carolina. Data for this research study was collected on evenings and weekends over a one-month period. Procedures to collect data included face-to-face interviews, journaling and examining records. Data collection for the interviews, journaling and examining of records took place in a private conference room at the reentry residential transitional home. A private room for the research study is defined as one that ensured anonymity and privacy by allowing the researcher to be alone when examining confidential records and allows for the participant to be present during the interview session as well as during the journaling phase (Maxwell, 2012).

The data was recorded by taking detailed field notes and audio recordings with a microcassette recorder. An additional microcassette recorder was taken on each interview for backup as well as additional batteries to minimize any mishaps. During the interview

process a journal was maintained which served as a consciousness of my values and interests that may infringe upon the analysis. In doing so, a log was maintained during the interview process where personal thoughts and perceptions of the participants' and their responses were noted. The journal allowed for re-examining of preconceived notions of the participants' response versus the actual response and was useful during the entire process of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012).

Consent forms were explained to all participants, and all questions that could arise were answered before interviews commenced. All participant names and alphanumeric codes assigned during this research study were placed in a fire proof locked safe that only the researcher had access to. Data recorded on the digital recorders was uploaded to a secure data storage file on a password protected computer that only the researcher had access to. The data will remain in the secure location for a period of three years after publication of the dissertation. Following this three-year period, all data and associated material will be destroyed (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013).

After data collection was under way, I found that the recruitment strategy was not working as well as anticipated. Because qualitative research is an iterative process, it is permissible to change the recruitment strategy, as long as the proper approvals are obtained. Proposed changes in the recruitment strategy must be submitted to the Walden University IRB (i.e., Institutional Review Board) as well as the dissertation committee that initially approved the research. If I happen to not meet the required threshold for required number of participants for this study, I had plans to meet with the Program Director of the reentry residential transitional home in order to request another mass

briefing meeting with the residents of the transitional home to re-introduce the study and the benefits that the research would bring to society because the research would help to increase the resources needed to develop a better reintegration process for African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations.

Compensation

During this mass briefing, it was disclosed that any resident who chose to be a part of this study would receive a monetary incentive in the amount of \$75.00 USD. This offer would be extended to the participants who volunteered for the study in the beginning stages of the recruitment process as well. This strategy was only to be implemented if I did not meet the required number of participants during the initial stages of the recruitment process so that I was able to enroll participants in the study who wish to remain and share their life stories for this research study.

Debriefing

Finally, the debriefing of my participants is very important. It is not uncommon during an interview for participants to become upset or unsettled. I hope to have no issues here, but to ensure no harm is not done to my participants, I debriefed the subjects and determined if any assistance, counseling, or further explanations of questions that were asked during the course of the interview was needed (Berg, 2009). During the debriefing process, participants were provided an opportunity to ask me any additional questions. If the discussion of any material raised during the interview prompted significant emotional stress, additional time was offered to process the participant's experience. Participants were made aware that appropriate referrals for follow-up services (i.e., mental health

services/counseling) could be provided upon request. Participants were provided contact information so that they could reach me or my doctoral chair with any subsequent questions or concerns. Participants were informed that they could receive a summary description of the final study upon completion, should they choose (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2011).

Data Analysis Plan

The primary goal of the analysis of data collected was to search for understanding and a deeper meaning of the experiences of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations after they are released from prison. This was accomplished by examining the similarities and differences of common practices and processes related to African American male ex-offender's with a history of multiple incarcerations experiences. The goal was to seek emerging themes, patterns and constructs (Creswell, 2012) across the sampled set of individual participants. The phenomenological research study gathered data from three sources: semistructured interviews, journaling and examining of records.

The information collected through these four sources allowed the research questions proposed as a means to be answered: *What are the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process during the transition from prison back into the community? What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after release from prison, and their ability to reintegrate back into society?*

Bazeley (2013) noted the purpose of data analysis is a process involving reduction, summarization, classification, and interpretation of information. For the purpose of this research study, general ideas, themes and concepts were analyzed based on a participant's perceptions and the descriptive framework aforementioned (Yin, 2015). Qualitative research is essential to phenomena because of its construct to analyze information from various sources (Creswell, 2012).

The primary goal of this phenomenological research study was to describe how this special population perceive the experiences associated with the reentry process. This was achieved through the process of horizontalization, a process of analysis where significant statements or quotes of the participants are highlighted to provide a better understanding of the experience of the African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations when analyzing the collected data (Silverman, 2011). Once the interviews were completed the data collected were transcribed; after transcription, coding began. Coding can be described as tags or labels for assigning units or meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study (Yin, 2015) and can be used to describe a word, a phrase or sentence even.

I listened to the recorded interviews and read through each transcript in order to pre-code the data by circling and underling significant words or passages (Yin, 2015). Open coding which is an analysis of the transcription word by word and line by line identifying concepts and categories by which the data can be broken down further (Saldana, 2012) was used. The process of open coding for this study consisted of making notation in the margins of the transcribed interview, this method allowed me to quickly

identify the codes while I reviewed the transcription and listened to the interview. This method also permitted me to easily develop categories for the open coding while aligning with Saldana (2012) which suggests I can quickly find, pull out and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question.

Multiple coding strategies were employed that enabled the shift from initial pre-coding of each transcript to final themes of this research study. Axial coding, the practice of relating concepts and categories to each other was used to disaggregate the core themes. Clusters of meanings from significant statements made during the interviews was used to generate themes. The codes were extracted from each interview transcription separately. These codes were recorded in a codebook (Saldana, 2012). The codebook allowed me to log and analyze pre-codes and then establish initial codes that are a compilation of all interview transcriptions. Initial codes were then be refined to create categories that were accurately group codes found in all of the transcriptions. Once categories were created, applicable codes were grouped across all transcriptions and then reduced from categories into themes. In doing so, I referred to the research questions, *What are the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process during the transition from prison back into the community? What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after their release from prison, and their ability to reintegrate back into society?* in order to make sure the themes satisfied these questions (Flick, 2014).

As proposed by Saldana (2012), a coding paradigm was used to organize the categories related to the phenomenological study, the conditions related to the phenomenon, the actions and interactional strategies directed at managing or handling the phenomenon and the consequences of the actions/interactions related to the phenomenon. The significant statements and themes were then be used to write textual descriptions of what this group of men experienced during the reentry process and structural descriptions of the context or setting that influenced the experience of the participants (Grbich, 2012). From the structural and textual descriptions, a composite description representing the essence, or common experiences of the African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations, were written.

Computer assisted qualitative analysis software was used to code the data such Nvivo 12 Plus. Nvivo 12 Plus software assisted with data reduction after taking notes during the audio-recorded and semistructured interviews with the participants. The caveat to computer software, such as Nvivo 12 Plus, does not apply to all research (Silverman, 2011). Nvivo 12 Plus usually does not assist with constructing meaning geared toward the phenomena of study, which does not always allow for structure and categorizations of the data process analysis (Silverman, 2011). The purpose of using computer software was to enable me to construct and organize information taken from notes, enable coding and triangulation of data. Using Nvivo 12 Plus allowed me to merge thoughtful interpretations of data analysis taken from participant's responses (Silverman, 2011) through color-coding.

Inductive reasoning was used after completing the process of phenomenological data analysis. I was able to determine the essence of the phenomenon after delineating and linking the meaningful units of transcribed data. The essence of the phenomenon was determined after I reflected upon the data that described the lived experiences of African American male ex-offender's with a history of multiple incarcerations reintegration process. The data was processed for thematic saturation, along with color coding the analysis. The coding process utilized pattern analysis to focus on conceptual relationships and repetitions in the data (Saldana, 2012).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Yin (2015) has provided numerous methods by which I ensured trustworthiness for a quality qualitative research study. This section addressed some concerns pertaining to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. Steps were taken to provide for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study by implementing strategies that are discussed in further detail in this section. The steps taken to address these concerns will follow.

Credibility must be established in phenomenological research to ensure validity and reliability of results (Patton, 2014). In fact, credibility in qualitative research parallels internal validity in quantitative studies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Credibility is defined as the methodological procedures and sources for establishing high levels of harmony between participants' experiences and the researcher's interpretations of the experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Credibility was primarily measured by the integrity of the researcher and can be established in a number of ways (Patton, 2014).

With regard to the analysis, I used data triangulation. Data triangulation is defined as comparing and crosschecking the consistency of information obtained with qualitative methods (Creswell, 2012). Triangulation involves the employment of multiple external methods, investigations, and theories to collect data. Triangulation helps the investigator reduce systematic bias and cross-examine the integrity of the participants' responses. Data was gathered from multiple sources (i.e., data triangulation) in order to achieve what Denzin & Lincoln (2011) refers to as completeness or an exhaustive response to the research question. My data collection strategies involved the use of individual interviews as well as examining the records of the participants. By gathering data from multiple sources, supporting data may be obtained from documents to provide a background to and help explain attitudes and behavior of the participants in the group, as well as to verify particular details that participants have supplied.

Denzin & Lincoln (2011) made the point that triangulation is somewhat like looking through a crystal to perceive all the facets/viewpoints of the data. Moreover, Denzin & Lincoln (2011) posited that triangulation should be reframed as crystal refraction (i.e., many points of light) to extrapolate the meaning inherent in the data. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) argued that no single method, theory or observer can capture all that is relevant or important. Therefore, it is recommended that qualitative inquiry research should have at least one or two techniques of triangulation.

Qualitative research data collection requires the researcher's self-immersion into the participants world view (Padgett, 2016). My immersion into the participant's world helped me to understand the context of the study and minimize the distortions of

information that might arise due to the presence of the researcher in the field. Researcher prolonged time in the field allowed me to experience the breadth of variation and extends understanding of participant's local construction and cultural context. There is no set amount of time a qualitative inquiry should last; but the proper length can be estimated by me once I have spent some time in the site (Creswell, 2012).

Prolonged engagement in the fieldwork helps me to understand the core issues that might affect the quality of the data because it helped develop trust with study participants. Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2013) observed that an extended time period is important because rapport increases, participants may volunteer different and often more sensitive information than they provide at the beginning of the research project. To ensure credibility of the qualitative study I had each participant review the written narrative to affirm accuracy (i.e., member checking) by validating interview responses. Member checking was conducted to validate trustworthiness by ensuring that each participant reviewed the findings and their responses were documented and taken into consideration. Member checks by me consisted of restating, summarizing, and/or paraphrasing the information presented to ensure that what the researcher heard or wrote was accurate. Member checking allowed for each participant to check for accuracy and correct any errors and make changes if necessary, and to verify the participant said what was intended. This process was used to affirm that the narrative (i.e., summary of the individual themes) accurately records the participants' views, feelings and experiences as well as depicted the phenomenon as the participants reported (Padgett, 2016).

The purpose of doing member checks to control the obliteration and my biases during the analysis and interpretation of the results. The interpretation means that analyzed and interpreted data is presented to participants for them to evaluate the interpretations made by me and suggest changes if they are unhappy with the interpretation made by me which are not reported by participants themselves. Participants may reject some interpretation made by me, either might be socially desirability or because of self-representation of the researcher. Member checks strategies include: first, establishing structural corroboration and coherence (i.e., testing all data to be sure there is no internal conflict or inconsistencies); second, establishing referential adequacy (i.e., testing all the analysis and interpretation against documents that were used during data collection and final member checks before producing a final document) as described above (Padgett, 2016).

Another element of member checking should involve verification of the researcher's emerging theories and inferences as they were formed during the dialogues. Where appropriate, I asked the participants if they could offer reasons for particular patterns observed by me. The importance of developing such a formative understanding is recognized by Padgett (2016) who writes that analysis and verification is something one brings forth with them from the field, not something which can be attended to later after the data are collected. When making sense of field data, one cannot simply accumulate information without regard to what each bit of information to represent in terms of its possible contextual meanings.

Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained and when further coding is no longer feasible (Ravitch & Mittenfelner, 2015). Failure to reach data saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted and hampers content validity (Ravitch & Mittenfelner, 2015). Researchers who design a qualitative research study come up against the dilemma of data saturation when interviewing study participants (Waruingi, 2013). In particular, researchers must address the question of how many interviews are enough to reach data saturation (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Berg (2011) firmly believed that saturation could be the guiding principle for qualitative data collection. Marshall & Rossman (2014) noted that data saturation may be attained by as little as six interviews depending on the sample size of the population. Therefore, I conducted in-depth interviews until the interviewer no longer heard or saw new information (i.e. point of data saturation). I anticipated that saturation would be reached quickly among the sample ($N=6$) because the possibility existed that there will be no new themes emerging in the data that was collected (Ravitch & Mittenfelner, 2015). During the point of saturation, most of the participants come to a point where each of them starts responding in the exact manner by repeating the same answers to the interview questions (Ravitch & Mittenfelner, 2015).

Reflective commentary was used to enhance the credibility of the qualitative research design (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The reflective commentary was used to record the researcher's initial impressions of each data collection session, patterns emerging in the data collected and theories generated. The commentary can play a key role in what

Rubin and Rubin (2011) term progressive subjectivity or the monitoring of one's own developing constructions, which I consider important in establishing credibility.

Ultimately, the section of commentary detailing emerging patterns and theories can inform the part of the research that addresses the project's results, and any discussion in the report of the effectiveness of the study may be based on the researcher's methods analysis within the reflective commentary (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Lastly, the use of peer debriefing also ensured credibility. Peer debriefing of this study provided me with feedback and independent checking for potential problems. According to Given (2015), peer debriefing provided me the opportunity to test my growing insights and to expose me to searching questions. A qualitative researcher is required during the process to seek support from other professionals who are willing to provide scholarly guidance.

During this qualitative research study, I sought the assistance of my postgraduate dissertation committee. During the course of my dissertation writing, I presented to my peers the study's findings and receive comments that derive from the perception of my peers in order to develop the conclusions of this study. The feedback from my peers helped to improve the quality of the inquiry findings (Creswell, 2012). Peer debriefing also increased reliability and soundness of the research through objective and professional third parties. To optimize face and content validity of the interview protocol, a diverse group of individuals including academics and practitioners, reviewed the contents before dissemination (Waruingi, 2013). Each representative received drafts of the instrument for review. Feedback from each representative determined the relevance

and comprehensiveness of questions, clarity of questions, and potential ethical or moral problems with questions (Waruingi, 2013).

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the qualitative study are applicable or useful to theory, practice and future research. Transferability implies that the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts and situations beyond the scope of the study context (Bernard, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2014) refers to this concept as ‘fittingness’ suggesting transferability has to do with the degree to which findings fit situations outside of the study and are found meaningful. According to Bernard (2016), I facilitated transferability judgement by a potential user through thick description and purposeful sampling. This means that when I provided a detailed description of the inquiry and participants were selected purposively, it facilitated transferability of the inquiry.

Thick description is described by Roller and Lavrakas (2015) as a method of achieving a type of external authority. By describing a phenomenon in adequate detail, one can begin to appraise the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and subjects. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings and is simply a matter of amassing relevant detail (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). In order to achieve thick description, I described the social action and interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations and so on that characterize a particular episode (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). I described the location and the people within it by giving visual photographs of the setting, the event and situations as well as verbatim narratives of individual’s accounts of their perceptions and

ideas in context. Through a natural perspective, I utilized thick descriptions for interviews in order to provide honest results associated with the participant's purposes of being interviewed during the fieldwork (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Thick description helps other researchers to replicate the study with similar conditions in other settings. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) argued that without this insight (i.e., thick description), it is difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings ring true.

Purposive sampling is the technique mainly used in naturalistic inquiry studies, and is defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals or institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). This sampling helps researcher's focus on key individuals who are particularly knowledgeable about the issues under investigation because purposive sampling allows judgmental decisions about the selection of participants to be made. In addition, it allowed me to decide why I wanted to use a specific category of informants in the study and it provided greater in-depth findings than other probability sampling methods (Yin, 2015). In other words, participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques in order to maximize the information to be uncovered from few participants but not for generalizability (Emmel, 2013).

Proper sampling techniques helped to ensure that the study had external validity (Gerber, Abrams, Curwood, & Magnifico, 2016). A nonbiased sample of six participants were chosen and allowed me to have transferability for the research study. Patton (2014) noted that transferability depends less on the size of a sample than on the richness of the

information gathered and the analytical abilities of the researcher. There was no issue with transferability of the results of this study for two vital reasons: (a) the participants are all from a residential reentry home in the Southeast, and (b) all participants are male ex-offenders transitioning from prison back into mainstream society. Participants are linked both to the context, community and social phenomenon being studied. I proved external validity for this study by making sure that there were no mistakes made that would limit the ability of the study to transfer the findings to other settings. Qualitative research is transferable if the data are consistent and tested-retested for reliability (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Compelling information can be gathered from the phenomenological interview questions, thus providing transferable data that can be replicated in other research studies (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Dependability was achieved by providing a detailed report of the process within the study to allow for easy duplication of the work and to enable readers of the qualitative research to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness in guiding this study (Flick, 2014). Dependability refers to the study's ability to be replicated. Alteration of the design or methodology may limit the ability to replicate the study. This limitation impacts the dependability of the research design (Klenke, 2015). To ensure dependability in the qualitative study, I tracked alterations in the design and methodology of the proposal. For instance, any changes in the areas of the number of participants or interviews, nonverbal cues or spoken text document were documented in order to validate the findings of this study (Flick, 2014).

Peer examination in principle is not different with the member checks strategy employed to enhance the credibility of the inquiry (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). During peer examination, I discussed my research process and findings with a neutral colleague (e.g., doctoral student) who had experience with qualitative research (Gerber, Abrams, Curwood, & Magnifico, 2016). This helped me to be honest about my study and also peers contributed to my deeper reflexive analysis. In addition, colleagues helped to identify the categories that are out of the framework of research questions or helped to identify negative cases (Gerber, Abrams, Curwood & Magnifico, 2016).

In qualitative phenomenological I ensured that an audit trail will be established (Patton, 2014). An audit trail was conducted by a third party to audit the events, influences and actions of the researcher. Records were kept and reviewed in an effort to provide a transparent description on how the qualitative data was conducted. The audit trail consisted of field notes, sampling decisions, ethical concerns and progress. A brief chronological index was created to help the auditor (Riazi, 2016). I was able to review the field notes and the associated documents to reconstruct how the study was conducted and how conclusions were reached. A reliable auditor was selected to become familiar with the study and its methodology and to audit the research interaction and the methodological and analytical processes of the researcher (Riazi, 2016).

Theory triangulation was also applied towards this study. According to Ravitch and Mittenfelner (2015), theory triangulation means the researcher still considers multiple theories and perspectives. All perspectives were examined. For example, when looking at African American male ex-offender's with a history of multiple incarcerations

account of being singled out for incarceration, I could have accepted this simply as an issue of race or wrongful incarceration. After all, there is a great deal of literature on the issues surrounding racial disparity and arrest rates. However, I looked further, noting this could also signal that offenders experience other physical, emotional and social obstacles during the reintegration process following their release from incarceration. The willingness to look beyond that led to the answers about reintegration from the African American male ex-offender's with a history of multiple incarcerations point of view.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of the inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of findings are not figments of the researcher's imagination, but is clearly derived from data (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Confirmability is an accurate means through which to verify the two basic goals of qualitative research: (a) to understand phenomenon from the perspective of the research respondents and (b) to understand the meanings given to experiences. Researchers interpret experiences of participants by a coding or mean-making process. Researchers look for emerging themes in the messages which aids in confirming the current knowledge. Confirmability adds a level of truthfulness to that which is being asserted in the research. Confirmability is often associated with reliability and objectivity in qualitative research and reduces the biases of the researcher (Zeegers & Barron, 2015).

As a researcher, I had to be aware of entering my own opinions and perceptions into data collection. These feelings and perceptions could have led to bias and/or misrepresentations of the data. Reflexivity is a way in which one can emphasize and

examine one's own awareness of consciousness of my personal values and perspectives (Patton, 2014). As researchers, we often take on social issues that are close to our personal interests. Recognizing that personal passions impact our perceptions and our analysis of these matters is necessary. Reflexivity reminds me to remain cognizant of my gender, any social, cultural and educational backgrounds that are rooted in and related to my own perceptions of particular social phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In an attempt to conduct an internal bias check and enhance data quality, I kept a journal of personal expectations, understandings, and feelings regarding the research and the participants. These entries were logged at various times, including after interviews with participants, and at other times that I thought would be applicable to capturing my thoughts. I paid special attention to record any observations that may have influenced my assumptions, coding, and interpretations of the data collected during interviews and during the course of the research (Patton, 2014).

Ethical Procedures

In qualitative research, several ethical issues are taken into consideration. The purpose of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is to ensure that research adheres to ethical, moral, and legal standards and does not cause more than minimal risk to participants. Because I accessed a vulnerable population, I was certain to follow the guidelines of Walden University's IRB. Maxwell (2012) specifically recommended that researchers working with human participants consider the impact of the research questions, the design, the methodology, the instrumentation, risks to participants, steps to minimize risks, data collection processes, informed consent, data analysis, confidentiality

and methods of dissemination of the results. For any qualitative study, a researcher must balance potential risk or harm of the participants with the social benefit of the study.

The informed consent agreement informed the participants of the research procedures, including the scope, data collection, potential risks or benefits of the research, confidentiality and withdrawal processes for the study (Creswell, 2014). Berg and Lune (2014) noted informed consent as a process where participants voluntarily agree to treatment, an intervention or research requiring clear understanding toward the purpose of the research. An informed consent agreement is integral to obtain before any data collection or study procedure is performed (Berg & Lune, 2014). The oversight of the protection of human participants was governed by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). No data was collected for this study prior to formal approval of the board. In addition, formal approval was obtained from the participating transitional home. The IRB approval form and letter of approval for data collection by the participating institution is provided in the appendices.

In all research activities, human participants should be provided with Informed Consent, including the details of the research procedures and benefits, risks and limitations related to participation and an understanding that participation was voluntary, confidential, and that the interview could be stopped at any time at the request of the interviewee (Berg & Lune, 2014). All participants had the sole discretion of voluntarily participating in this research. At any segment of the research, participants could withdraw from the study without cause or justification for withdrawal without harm or an explanation. Participants were made aware that they can withdraw without penalty

before, during and after completion and submission of the data collection, and that the immediate withdrawal of the participants' data, and identification of any secured and confidential information provided would result in the destruction of the data.

For this study, I identified, selected and recruited participants through a purposeful sampling approach. A request to select participants and conduct a research study was made to the appropriate personnel in charge of the transitional home before soliciting participants. Permission was obtained from the personnel in charge of the organization from which I solicited purposeful participants. The person in charge of the organization had to sign the authorized IRB (i.e., Institutional Review Board) letter of approval form prior to commencing to recruit participants for this study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015).

Upon consent, a flyer was distributed in the transitional home explaining the premise/purpose of the research and that participation in the research was voluntary, and no repercussions would be incurred for participating, other than not being allowed to participate in the interview session. All of the participant's questions about the purpose of the study were clearly answered by me before asking them to sign a legal form of consent. In addition, I thoroughly explained and answered any questions about the legal form of consent before conducting any interview sessions. While participation in a research project has potential for risk, the risks for participation in this study were fairly low. Participants were informed of the minimal risks involved in this study such as a feeling uncomfortable discussing painful experiences or the possibility of emotional distress (i.e., shame or remorse) arising during the interview. I offered supportive

reassurance and the opportunity for interview to be ended if participants begin to express emotional distress. In addition, I was be ready to alert the transitional home staff if any of the participants experience any emotional distress during the interview process so that counseling resources can be offered if needed (Silverman, 2011).

The research study stressed safety and confidentiality for all participants by adhering to the American Psychological Association's ethical guidelines and requirements pertaining to research studies. The participant's identities remained confidential, including any data used to conduct this study. Confidentiality is integral to protecting the participants from any unintentional hardship or harm (Patton, 2014). I protected the identity of the participants by securing and locking all information shared, discussed and collected during the interviews (i.e., transcribed interviews, interview guides, consent forms and audio recording devices) in a locked filing cabinet in an undisclosed location to which only the researcher has access. To protect the identity of participants, the use of alphanumeric codes assisted with identifying participants, and was used when entering data into the software as well as for any data that was stored in electronic format. Numeric codes such as P1, P2, P3, and so forth appeared on the notes, consent forms, and all research documents in place of the participant's name in order to ensure anonymity during the research study (Patton, 2014).

All electronic forms of data, reports, and documentation were stored on the researcher's personal computer, with backup copies on a flash drive. The electronic data was password protected and no other person had access to the data except the researcher. Security of the audio recordings consisted of downloading the digital files to the hard

drive of a Dell desk top computer. The computer was located in an undisclosed location unless otherwise directed by Walden University (Bazeley, 2013).

An imposed timeline for storing the data was set for five years following the completion of this research project. Destruction of the data will happen five years after the publication of the dissertation by shredding of hard copy data and deleting of computer-based files. After files are deleted from the computer, the backup copies on the flash drive and recordings from the audio device will be deleted to ensure that all sensitive data has been completely destroyed. Any master lists of alphanumeric codes associated with this research will be destroyed following five years of the study's completion (Bazeley, 2013).

I must acknowledge assumptions that accompany me during the process of data collection and interpretation. As Berg & Lune (2014) note, researchers pick their topics often because of passionate feelings about the issues involved. My personal biases and expectations in this study were monitored and discussed with my doctoral chair and committee. Soliciting feedback from the doctoral committee helped to cross-reference and verify the data that was gathered during the study.

Summary

Phenomenology has been determined to be the most appropriate design to address this exploratory research study because it allows for greater insight into the perceived reality of the participants' experiences. The goal of phenomenological research was to deepen the understanding of a particular experience. Sampling selections was purposeful and not left to chance or random selection (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Included in this

section were ethical considerations, reduced personal biases, protection of the participants' rights, and confidentiality.

Using the qualitative phenomenological research methodology enabled participants to describe directly the transitional process from prison back into the community. Based on the inner attributes of the descriptions from the perspectives of the participants' lived experiences, beliefs, values and meaning were given to the phenomenon of reentry. Because phenomenological research seeks to identify the specific perceptions of the participants, data was collected in one-to-one interviews which will last 45 minutes or until saturation occurred (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2011). Interviews included all six *participants* which was sufficient to meet saturation of data. Data collected during interviews were coded and categorized. Interpretation was made from the data collected based on emerging themes (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2011). This methodology successfully captured the key 'human meanings' of the lived experiences from the worldview, opinion, and belief of the African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. The data analysis results and emerging themes are analyzed and interpreted in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover and understand the essence of the post-prison lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegration into society after being released from prison within 3-5 years. Six African-American male ex-offenders shared their experiences in semistructured interviews. This research has implications for positive social change: Addressing the influence of African American males' history of multiple incarcerations on their economic, emotional and social adjustment after release from prison and their ability to reintegrate into society broadens the knowledge of the field of social services to better understand and accommodate the needs of these men as they seek to cope with prisoner reentry and challenges of post-prison adjustment (Garland, Wodah, & Schuuhmann, 2013). The central research questions were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process the transition from prison back into the community?
2. What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after release from prison, and the ability to reintegrate back into society?

The data were analyzed and connected back to the central research questions to depict their personal experiences regarding the challenges of the reentry process. The process of coding the data helped me to identify significant statements, phrases and

themes, which provided insight into the participants' experiences with the reentry process, including similarities among themes and categories from the data. SRT and SIT shed light on themes discovered during data analysis.

Chapter 4 covers the following topics: purpose of the study, central research questions, research setting, participant demographics, population, data collection, data analysis evidence of trustworthiness, a review of the findings, and a summary.

Research Setting

Purposive criterion sampling was used to recruit participants from a reentry transitional home in the southeastern region of South Carolina. Once IRB approval was obtained for the research study, (Approval No. 01-28-19-0143277), and the program director granted his approval, a recruitment flyer was displayed at the reentry transitional home in the southeastern region of South Carolina asking for volunteers to participate in the study (see Appendix C). Each participant who called the number listed on the recruitment flyer was prescreened over the telephone. I asked each caller some questions to see if he met the requirements for the research study. The interview process was explained to each participant, including how the data was going to be used. I informed the participants that I would provide them with monetary compensation in the amount of \$75 as a thank you for their participation in the research study. I also explained to each participant that he could withdraw from the research study at any time or refuse to answer any question that made him feel uncomfortable.

I asked each participant if he would have any problems that would prevent him from participating in the research study before the interview, and I had each participant

sign an informed consent form before the interview. I conducted a face-to-face interview with six participants using an audio recorder. The interviews were conducted at the reentry transitional home and were coordinated by reentry staff in advance. The interview setting offered privacy, convenience and comfort to help ensure each interview was successful. The room was spacious and comfortable for participants and myself.

I gave the participants the option of conducting the interviews after work or on the weekend at a time that was convenient for them. The participants agreed to be interviewed after work during the weekend at a mutually agreed upon time. The reentry transitional home was closed for business on the days the qualitative interviews were being conducted, for the privacy of the participants. Each participant was thanked for taking time out of their schedule to consent to the interview. The interview process was explained to each participant, including how the data would be used.

I asked each participant if they had questions before the interview. I informed the participants that after I transcribed the interview, I would provide a copy of the interview transcript via e-mail or in person for member checking. After the interview, I debriefed the participants and provided them with the opportunity to express any concerns regarding their participation in the research study or if they experienced any discomfort as a result of participation in the study. None of the participants requested to withdraw from the study or expressed any emotional or psychological stress during the interview.

Demographics

The participants included six African American male ex-offenders who self-identified as an African American male ex-offender who had a history of multiple

incarcerations and were faced with reintegration back into society after being released from prison within 3-5 years. I determined their eligibility to meet the study's criteria during an initial telephone conversation. The participants provided their demographic information that I hand-recorded on a separate demographic questionnaire for each participant. Inclusion criteria were used to screen for the method of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations, were English speaking, who served more than 1 year in a southern state or federal prison, had committed felony offenses in the south-eastern region of the state, who were housed in a residential reentry center, and were not mentally unstable or cognitively impaired.

The participant demographics are listed below in Table 1. The names and geographical locations of the participants were not included in the study's results to protect their identities. Instead, the participants names were replaced with a number beginning with number one for the first participant (P1) and so forth for each remaining five participants. Five of the participants were single and one was divorced. The participants ages ranged from 34 to 51 years old. All of the participants were employed with the exception of one participant. The highest level of education for the participants was an Associate's degree and the lowest level of education was 10th grade completion. The highest period of incarceration was 13 years and the lowest level of incarceration was 13 months. I reviewed the informed consent forms with each participant before obtaining their signature. I also reassured each participant of their rights. The participants were selected because of their lived experience with the phenomenon of transitioning back into society after being released from prison.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Years served	Marital status	Employment
P1	47	African American	GED	13 months	Divorced	Employed
P2	43	African American	11 th Grade	13 years	Single	Employed
P3	51	African American	Associate Degree	14 months	Single	Employed
P4	49	African American	Graduated High School	2 years	Single	Employed
P5	34	African American	GED	2 years	Single	Employed
P6	35	African American	10 th Grade	13 years	Single	Unemployed

Data Collection

Six participants met the criteria for this study and consented to participate. The six semistructured interviews included a series of open-ended questions designed to induce an exploration of the lived experiences of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations who had experienced the phenomenon of transitioning back into society after being released from prison (see Appendix E). The use of phenomenological design places the researcher and participant in a position that allows them to connect the experiences of the phenomenon together (Moustakas, 1994). Participants were recruited for the study through a recruitment flyer between April 2019 and May 2019 (see Appendix C).

The data collection process started after the Walden University IRB approved the research study. I conducted a brief 15-minute telephone meeting to collect background information about each participant. I explained to each participant over the telephone about the study and answered any questions to them over the telephone before setting up the in-person interview. I screened six participants over the telephone in May 2019 who met the criteria for the research study. I interviewed six participants between June 2019 and August 2019. Each participant was provided with a copy of the informed consent form to sign in person which were reviewed with each participant and collected at the time of the interview. I went over the study again with each participant before starting the interview, and I allowed the participants to ask me questions. I conducted face-to-face interviews with six African American male participants at a reentry residential transitional home in the southeastern region of South Carolina.

Before each interview began, I thanked the participant for their time. Each participant received an introduction to the questions to be explored during the meeting. I reminded the participants that (a) the interview would be recorded using a digital voice recorder; (b) they would receive a copy of the transcript to review for completeness and accuracy; (c) and they could stop the interview at any time without penalty. There were no interruptions during the interviews, and each participant was only interviewed once. Noe of the participants withdrew from the research study at any point in the interview process.

An interview protocol was used to ensure consistency in the flow of the interview. Interview questions including prompts were used as a tool to guide and explore topics

further, document lived experiences, as well as take hand-written notes during the interview. I used an informal, long interview that included a series of open-ended questions (see Appendix E) that was designed to induce a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon of African American males with a history of incarcerations transition after their release from prison back into the community. I also observed nonverbal communication such as facial expressions and body language of each participant as they shared their experience. Each interview was recorded verbatim as the participant conveyed their lived experience including grammatical errors and slang. The shortest interview lasted 1 hour 16 minutes, and the longest interview lasted 2 hours 49 minutes. The average time for the in-depth interviews was 1 hour 53 minutes. For some questions, the participant asked for the question to be rephrased to ensure they understood what was being asked. Each participant was willing to share their lived experience and appeared to be honest in their responses.

The interview protocol included space to take notes or rephrase the interview questions that the participants needed further clarification, and ensure the participants answered each interview question. The results of the data collected from six African American male ex-offenders include the details of their lived experiences revealed from their perspectives. The interviews were transcribed within 48 hours of the interview which allowed me to properly document the information as accurately as possible. Participants were encouraged to be as honest as possible and to just tell their stories based on their lived experiences when responding to each interview question.

I labeled each participant's audio recorded file and transcribed interview as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and so forth to ensure their anonymity. Each participant was asked to participate in member checking to ensure the accuracy of information and findings from the interviews. I informed the participants that this process would take no more than 30 minutes. Each participant agreed to participate in the member checking process. I verified the e-mail address of each participant's e-mail account as this was the primary delivery method for the transcripts they were completed.

I used a journal to track the codes and themes to categorize the responses to each question. Each participant's transcribed interview was read and re-read several times, and I highlighted every significant statement that was relevant to the experience. The meaningful colors were highlighted in different colors to effectuate a color code for each potential theme that emerged from the data. For example, if I saw the word stigma was used, I used a colored ink pen to underline, and similar statements were grouped according to emerging themes. Next, I made a list of each sentence or phrase that provided a representation of the thoughts of each participant. The sentences or phrases provided an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon.

Common themes and data saturation were achieved from the six participants, with similar experiences and perceptions recorded to illustrate consistency in the data. During the de-briefing process, each participant received a copy of the transcribed interview transcript via email to review for accuracy. The de-briefing process allowed for each participant to ensure accuracy of their accounts and the transcription accurately reflected

their words and meanings. Participant profiles were recorded on a participant demographic form to obtain background information.

Participant Profiles

Six African American male ex-offenders who had a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegration back into society after being released from prison participated in this study. Given that African American males reflect the largest population during the reentry process in the United States, the rationale for conducting this study on this particular group was to explore their lived experiences and perceptions regarding the impact of the process of reentry on their lives after they are released from prison. The information collected from the participant demographic forms enhanced the data gathered from the interview questions and provided an understanding of the impact of the reentry process on this particular group of individuals. Each participant story was based on their experiences as an ex-offender. The background data was essential to this study as the data increased the validity of the research data.

Participant 1

The first participant was P1, a 40-49-year-old single male who was divorced. P1 had obtained a GED certificate. P1 served 13 months in prison for drug distribution and had been incarcerated over 30 times in the past. P1 was the father of 11-year-old twins a boy and a girl. His primary concern was being in the lives of his children and wanting to be able to provide for them once he was released from prison. During the interview, he proudly spoke of his current employment as a fork lift operator and he secured the job in

a timeframe of two weeks. P1's goals for the future were to save up to be able to buy his own home and he wanted to be supervisor of his warehouse within 5 years.

Participant 2

P2 was a 40-49-year-old single man who did not have any children. P2 served 13 years in prison for voluntary manslaughter and had been incarcerated twice in the past. P2's highest grade level completed was the 11th grade. P2 was working at the local laundromat and shared his enthusiasm about making sure the place for safe for all persons to utilize especially women and their young children. P2 was also in barber school was on course for graduation within a month. P2 was very passionate about sharing his lived experiences and oftentimes became very emotional during the course of the interview. P2 loved to increase his knowledge by reading and listed several genres of books that he had completed. P2's goals for the future were to have his own barbershop within the next year. He also spoke about his desire work with African Americans specifically women who had been abused and their children.

Participant 3

P3 was a 50-59-year-old single man who was the father of one child. P3 served 14 months in prison for Shoplifting Enhancement and had been incarcerated eight times in the past. P3 had an Associate's degree. P3 noted that he had a history of substance abuse and supported a 20-year drug habit by working and shoplifting. P3 was employed and received his job three weeks after entering the reentry transitional home. P3's future goals were to be married within 5 years, to have his own home and to be eventually living in Arkansas.

Participant 4

P4 was a 40-49-year-old single man who did not have any children. P4 served 2 years in prison for distribution of crack cocaine and had been incarcerated around five to six times in the past. P4 had graduated from high school. P4 was employed as a cook at a local restaurant and absolutely loved his job. P4 lost his parents at an early age and became rooted in criminal activity in his early 20's. P4 spoke about his struggles with addiction that began in his early adult life and had a great influence on his participation in illegal activities. P4's future goals were to be a home owner within the next few years.

Participant 5

P5 was a 30-39-year-old single man who was the father of three children who he expressed great adoration for during the course of the interview. P5 had served 2 years in prison for drug distribution and had been incarcerated five times in the past. P5 had a GED certificate. P5 was currently employed in the field of carpentry. P5 spoke about his early childhood upbringing and how it was rough. He revealed that this led to him becoming involved in selling drugs at the early age of 12. P5 spoke about his past relationship with his nieces and nephews and how he wanted a better life for them and his children. P5's was open and honest about not knowing where he saw himself in the near future but did express throughout the interview that he desired to move to Atlanta or California. P5 concluded by stating that he knew that one day in the future he would buy some land and build a house on that land.

Participant 6

P6 was a 30-39-year-old single man who did not have any children. P6 had a 10th grade education level. P6 had served 13 years in prison for armed robbery/kidnapping and had been incarcerated once in the past. P6 was not employed at the time of this interview. P6 was an avid reader and spoke about how he coped in prison by reading and writing. P6 spoke in detail about his childhood and that he was taken from his mother at the age of five years old and placed with a foster care agency. He noted that at the age of 15 he was reunited with his biological mother. P6 admitted that his involvement in illegal crimes started in his early 20's and involved stealing out of stores, grand larceny, selling drugs and eventually armed robbery. P6's goals for the future included securing a job, obtaining housing, building his credit and several business ideas. One of the business ventures that P6 spoke about was creating his own app and wanting to build a successful company in the future.

Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed using the 7 steps for phenomenological research analysis established by van Kaam and modified by Moustakas (1994). The use of the 7-step approach helped to analyze and synthesize the data effectively. After each interview was complete, I hand coded the data before uploading all of the interviews into the qualitative computer software program (Nvivo 12 Plus) to confirm themes found. Each interview was transcribed within 48 hours of data collection and stored on a secured portable hard device. I followed Moustakas (1994) recommendations by engaging in epoche to help recognize any biases related to the phenomenon. I used inductive data

analysis to examine similarities and patterns that exist between the participants and effectively analyzed and synthesized the data. I was interested in finding similar elements that existed between African American male ex-offenders to develop a summary of my interpretation of each interview for member checking. As I began to analyze the data, I carefully listened to each interview multiple times while transcribing the data and immersed myself in the data to understand the essence of each participant's experience.

I pre-coded the data to identify boundaries to assist with describing the amount and quality of data being collected for coding thus putting emphasis on the specific data that answered the central research question. Transcription of each interview took eight to ten hours. In addition to transcribing the context, I listened for emotional cues that indicated a change in the participant mood and tone of voice as their experiences were recanted. I ensured that I was responsive to the frequency and context associated with codes that were germane to the research question. At the completion of each interview, I contacted the participant to inform them that the transcript was ready for review. The transcripts were emailed to participants with instructions to return within 72 hours.

I used first and second coding methods (Saldana, 2013) to analyze the data. Saldana (2013) asserted the first cycle coding is preliminary evaluation of concepts, phrases or statements frequently asked by participants. Codes were grouped into specific categories and concrete themes. Based on the type of research conducted, these categories were used by themselves or combined (Saldana, 2013). By moving carefully through the data using first cycle coding, I was able to give particular attention in N-vivo coding, descriptive coding, emotions coding and values coding (Saldana, 2013). Second cycle

coding helped me cycle back to data collected during the first cycle coding (Saldana, 2013). I also re-organized the data to focus on the direction of the study back to the central research question. The connection between first and second cycle coding consisted of provisional interconnections to uncover patterns, themes and the essence of the phenomenon under study.

Saldana (2013) explained that NVivo codes give attention to the words, phrases or direct quotes used by participants as codes which respects the voice of the participants. Descriptive codes are nouns that are used to summarize words or phrases (Saldana, 2013). Emotion codes identify the feelings of each participant or describe their reaction as indicated by the researcher during the interview (Saldana, 2013). Value codes reflect the values, attitudes and beliefs of the participants based on their perspective or world view (Saldana, 2013). Computer assisted qualitative analysis software was used to code the data (Nvivo 12 Plus). The software assisted with data reduction after taking notes during the audio-recorded and semistructured interviews with the participants. The purpose of using computer software was to enable me to construct and organize information taken from notes, enable coding and triangulation of data. Using Nvivo 12 Plus allowed me to merge thoughtful interpretations of data analysis taken from participant's responses through color-coding (Silverman, 2011).

In Step 1, I used the modified van Kaam method of analysis (Moustakas, 1994). After transcribing each interview, I read it multiple times and highlighted all significant statements germane to the participant's experience. Each significant statement was highlighted in a different color to help code the data and make it easier to identify

emerging themes. I created a list of each sentence or phrase that reflected the views of each participant. These sentences and phrases helped to understand how each participant experienced the phenomenon. The process of horizontalization helped me to view each statement as equal or having equal significance (Moustakas, 1994).

In Step 2, reduction and elimination allowed me to evaluate the expressions of each participant to ascertain if including the sentence or phrase was needed and satisfactorily described elements of the phenomenon. I was able to identify the meaning units of the experience and redundant phrases were eliminated to reduce the data to data of useful significance to the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). After engaging in a thorough read of each sentence and phrase to determine equal value, all repetitive, unrelated and unclear statements were not considered for further analysis. The identified and labeled horizons were clustered into 385 significant statements to textual descriptions for 262 themes. Subsequently, resulted in generating composite descriptions for 10 final themes. In Step 3, clustering and thematizing, is a process of gathering the core categories of the participant experience and placing the invariant constituents into themes (Moustakas, 1994). After recognizing and combining overlapping and repetitive categories, I clustered the 262 preliminary categories into 10 themes. This step helped me to arrange the data into themes that reflected the fundamental essence of the experience.

In the Step 4, I substantiated the central themes of the participant experience to ensure the phrases and corresponding themes were consistent with the transcribed interview of each participant (Moustakas, 1994). Each transcript was compared to the central themes to determine the themes were clearly stated to each participant, if not

clearly articulated, the theme consistent with the descriptions of the participants, and if they were not clearly articulated, the theme was germane to the lived experience of the participant. The data analysis resulted in identifying 10 themes.

In Step 5, each pertinent and substantiated phrase related to the specific themes was constructed into individual textural descriptions of the experience as articulated by the participant. This step helped me grasp what each participant experienced (Moustakas, 1994). I used verbatim examples from each transcribed interview in this step. In Step 6, construction of individual textural descriptions for each participant, I included a structural explanation of how the experience happened into the textural description (Moustakas, 1994). In Step 7, I constructed the textural and structural descriptions the what and how of each participant (Moustakas, 1994).

The essence of the experiences of an individual are never ending. After following the step as outlined in the modified van Kamm method of analysis, I integrated the description into a composite description of meanings and essence of the lived experience as articulated by the participant. I critically evaluated the data to eliminate any data that could not be used. Every theme identified supported each participant response and served as confirmation that saturation was achieved when the information provided from the participants became repetitive and new codes and themes no longer related to the research. I achieved saturation with the sixth interview as no new data emerged. A discrepant case is data that departs from the perspective on the phenomenon being studied (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). No discrepant cases or contradictory findings were found in the data.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure credibility and adherence to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice (Walden University, 2019), I secured approval from the Walden University IRB approval on January 28, 2019. I maintained the integrity of all guidelines throughout the process. I employed all protocols described in Chapter 3 to safeguard the credibility of the research during the data collection and analysis process. Reflexivity, in the form of bracketing and recording of the preconceptions about the phenomenon, was implemented to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the findings (Houghton, et al., 2013). There was mutual collaboration with the participants to address reflexivity. During the mutual collaboration process, the participants became involved in the evaluation of the data. I kept a reflexive journal of each interview to record how prior experiences with the reentry process might influence the analysis process. The chronicled notes from the journal were read and re-read to ensure that any prejudgments about the participants were bracketed before the commencement of the analysis.

I used member checking to verify the accuracy of the interview data after the transcription of each participant's interview (Anney, 2014). Each participant was sent a copy of the interview transcript and asked to read the transcript to verify that it accurately represented their statements during the interview. Each of the six participants confirmed that the transcript provided a correct accounting of their interview. I informed the participants that they would be able to view the final dissertation after it was analyzed and approved. As stated in Chapter 3, I employed saturation to add to the credibility of

the study. After the transcripts were completed, coded and member checked, I conducted a final examination to ensure that saturation was attained. Saturation was accomplished after the sixth interview when no new information or themes emerged (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Triangulation was also implemented to corroborate the findings of the study (Anney, 2014). The themes were triangulated against the conceptual framework of Tajfel's (1982) (SRT) and Becker's (1963) (SIT). There were no adjustments or changes to the strategies conveyed in Chapter 3 that might affect the credibility of the present study.

Transferability

As outlined in Chapter 3, I used thick descriptions to ensure transferability. Thick descriptions, in the form of detailed context driven illustrations of the perceptions and experiences of the participants, were provided to enhance transferability of this study. Thick descriptions involved the use of multiple interview data, audio and written, as well as multiple paragraph contextualization to ensure integrity and transferability. No changes were made to the description of procedures in Chapter 3 that directly influenced the transferability of this study. Although qualitative studies are not usually generalizable to wider populations, transferability is facilitated when individuals reading the findings in a study can associate the findings with their experiences (Cope, 2014). It is hoped that the contextual information that I provided in this study would be used for further study.

Dependability

Researchers use dependability in qualitative studies, to outline context, research method and type of participants used in a study to determine whether the results would

differ in a similar research (Houghton et al., 2013). To ensure dependability, I adhered to Walden University's quality standards and guidelines. Also, I actively engaged with my dissertation committee throughout the process and incorporated recommendation and suggestions, particularly for issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures. Also, as previously highlighted, I adhered to the van Kaam method of data analysis as well as member transcript verification. An audit trail, specifying the steps of the research process, was the approach used to enhance the dependability of this study (Moustakas, 1994). I reported details of all steps in the data collection process, and analysis method used to determine the findings. No changes were made to the procedures described in Chapter 3 that might affect the dependability of this study.

Confirmability

For confirmability, the modified van Kamm method fulfilled the core concept of bracketing as essential to the phenomenological research. This essential element of phenomenological research is inherently reflexive, thereby satisfying the standard of confirmability. Cope (2014) stated that confirmability in qualitative research is based on the extent to which the researcher can demonstrate that the findings are centered on an interpretation of the data, and not on the perceptions of the researcher. The bracketing process included an initial self-interview along with data analysis to surface themes associated with the lived experiences of being an ex-offender who has been released from prison and was transitioning back into society. Consequently, bracketing and reflexivity allowed for emerging possible biases while processing interview data with deep listening and fresh seeing. The employment of bracketing helped to minimize threats to

confirmability by looking beyond any biases, assumptions, and preconceptions of the phenomenon under study. I took careful reflective notes to establish confirmability as I reflected on the insights and feelings presented by the participants as they narrated their stories during the interviews (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). There was no deviation from the strategies previously described in Chapter 3 that could affect the confirmability of this study.

Results

This qualitative phenomenology study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of African American males who have had a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegration back into society after being released from prison within 3-5 years. There were several patterns, themes and relationships that emerged as I immersed myself into the data. The patterns that emerged as a result of this study included the economical, emotional and social challenges of the reentry process and willingness to speak candidly about their experience related to transitioning back into society after being released from prison. All statements with significant meaning were emphasized, and commonalities were identified to formulate meaning units and clustered into organized themes.

From six verbatim transcripts, 385 significant statements were extracted to include formulated meanings, clusters of themes and sub-themes. I analyzed 262 working themes for unique theme representation and words dedicated to each theme resulted in 10 final themes. These themes include the following: (a) environment/ criminal involvement; (b) experience in prison; (c) community returned to after release; (d)

fears/worries after release; (e) role of programs; (f) stigma/discrimination; (g) challenges/barriers after release; (h) family relationship/social support; (i) religious beliefs; and (j) strong will/determination to succeed.

Emergent Theme 1: Environment/Criminal Involvement

The first theme, *environment/criminal involvement*, emerged when the six participants described how the experiences of the environment can interfere with an ex-offender's personal growth and well-being while they are transitioning back into the society after their release (Sampson, 2012). Each participant expressed how returning to their old neighborhoods that are associated with factors of criminal activity, gangs and drugs could influence criminal behavior. They described how the environment and mindset are related to ex-offenders transitioning from prison and returning back into the community. Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as outlined below:

P1: I think I was trying to get rent money. The decision I made, I guess I could say desperate times, desperate measures and I wasn't thinking. I didn't want my kids and family on the streets so I made that choice to sell and I guess that was a bad choice. It was a bad choice at the end of the day but that was mainly the reason why I ended up going to prison because I was trying to provide for my family.

P2: I think, again, when my stepfather step out- that is the point I have to return to. At every stage in my life, I have to return to that point because in my soul, I truly believe that is where I stepped away because I wasn't a child that was in the

streets. I was never into the streets until I got much older, probably about 18.

That's when I started really, really getting off into the streets. Up until that point I was in school. I was always helping my stepfather. I was always with my mother always- she would pick me up sometimes. Stuff like that. I was always in the company of good people. It's just that once that separated, I had to find a role model and anything filled that void that was a male figure, particularly my oldest brother who was heavily into crime. Then I started to follow that. Then my youngest brother fell right behind me and I didn't realize the importance of role models until we'd got into the county jail together. Me and my brother in the county jail together. I asked him, I said, "Why are you in here?" He said, "I came here to try to help you." It hurt me so bad just to hear that.

I think once stepfather stepped away, my brother was constantly coming around. He's talking about this and talking about that. Then I met a few guys. As I got a little older started meeting people and I think that the guys I met coupled with my own curiosity, because we can't exclude ourselves totally. You're part of it also. My own curiosity and my desire to want to experience things and to know things and to have things, because that's probably with will. That's why I got dragged into crime.

P3: Hmm. I guess, um, the, uh deeper you get into drug. My drug of choice was crack cocaine. Um, the more I did that drug takes over your body. And, it takes over to the point where is that, you wake up with it, you go to bed with it. I mean it really consumes you-it-it just totally consumes you. And um, that uh, when you

get into that, the, uh, um, you would almost do anything. So I would think that, um, your, um, it conscious leaping, uh, thinking ability to think rationally to make sound rational decisions actually leaves you. And I, uh, I can't say who a one person won't do or one person will do, but I can tell you what I've done. And uh, for me, I, I uh, for me to one day, uh, I wanted to get high and don't spend all money. And I worked all weekend. It started out going into these stores and just taking stuff. Just shoplifting that's the- as matter of fact I went to prison for it.

P4: I was driving without a license, shoplifting, assisting with selling drugs, basically the things that I've done, grand larceny, stuff like that. I had a lot of friends I hung with when I wanted to do illegal stuff, like selling drugs, I was selling for my roommate. We lived together, and he'll never say no to drugs. When I needed money, that's when I would go out and do the shoplifting, driving and stuff like that.

I think it was an ongoing battle with me trying to get a hold of my addiction. It's not like I really wanted to do it, but it was a situation where that basically was all I knew at that particular time. It was either selling drugs even though I had little payday and a job and what not. I didn't use my finances to the best of my ability. I had to go out and do things in order to make money. The reason why the crimes I've done graduated because I kept doing them over and over and getting caught.

P5: It was money. Like family, they really just had enough money for both food and clothing you know so started out selling downtown on the market. And from there, things started getting slow in that so, started selling drugs after that. Like I

said family problems, friends, the neighborhood I grew up in. Like, that's all— Well, that's all that was going on then. Kinda like that was like, the only way to survive, dealing with yourself. If your parents didn't even got-got the cash to help you out and buy clothes for you, you know, so basically, had to resort back to the streets.

P6: Um, like I said, um, you know, due to me being raised in an adoption agency and experiencing what I was experiencing with my foster mom, um, I ran away at the age of 15, so, you know, you take a 15-year-old, um, you know, chances are you're not gonna find employment. Um, I didn't have a place to really live, so I was pretty much, you know, sleeping from couch to couch. Um, I had like a little place and, so, you know, I stayed over there for a while, but, you know, that-that didn't last long. And, um, you know, I was sleeping in, you know, abandoned cars or what have you. And, um, like I said, you know, um, nobody is really trying to give a 15-year-old a job, so, you know, you had to do what you do-- you had to do for means of, uh, survival, so, you know, I started off, um, you know, I had to clothe myself and feed myself. I started, you know, stealing in the stores, um, you know, whether it's close or, uh, grocery stores. Um, you know, I started breaking in people's cars, um, you know, just a few houses, things of that-- things of that nature and then, you know, it eventually led me to, um, you know, selling drugs, you know. So, um, that pretty much, you know, led to, you know, my incarceration, that-that type of lifestyle, you know. Even though I was still, you

know, like in school and things of that nature, um, but, you know, it's I would say that's-that's what led to it pretty much.

Emergent Theme 2: Experience in Prison

The second theme, *experience in prison*, emerged when the six participants described how their time spent in prison affected their post-prison experiences (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Each participant expressed his perception of his individual experience while incarcerated. They described their experiences of prison from their daily routines, interactions with other inmates, interactions with correctional staff and programs that they participated in during their time as an inmate. Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as outlined below:

P1: You get up. You can go eat breakfast if you want to but after that nothing.

They don't have nothing for nobody to do back there. Really, they don't. It's just sitting and just doing your time. That's sad, though, but that's exactly how they have it set up. For you to just sit and do your time. Some people in there are bitter, some people try to find things to do, but a typical day is just, get up, look at TV, go back to your bunk, lay down, wait to eat again, go back to your bunk, lay down. It's just, every day.

The COs used to come to work, they were mad or they might've had a bad day at home, they bring their problems to work. Write them down or write you up. Some of them just talk at you for no reason. Check you out. Just the COs. They were the ones I hated the most and I hate to say that. Even though you tried to stay out of their way and do what you're supposed to do, you always had them

few to come in there with a little chip on their shoulder or they want to bully people around because they got a position.

I was in a little program called Spice. I was in a Christian program. It's helpful I can say because it got me into the reentry residential transitional home.

They had little classes for us, that was going on, like a financial class. They got me into a HVAC class. To me, mentally, I just stayed in the Bible. Prayed and God has given me guidance and helped me once I was released. No man, God helped me out. He did and still is though, really. We had classes on being a better man, father, this that and other but the downfall of what it was is that everything that the program, that they had when you got release was for people in the surrounding area. They had a volunteer that'll come and speak to us so they would help do this or do that once you're released just contact us when you're released but they can't reach out of the state which is where I was from.

P2: For me now because I can't speak nobody else. My typical day was getting my first thing in the morning, we're going to get us some breakfast, chow time, but I always try to get up early because I want to read my dictionary. I get up first thing in the morning and walk around with my dictionary as soon as they pop the doors. I'm walking around reading my dictionary and I might do some type of studying or something in my head. For the most part, man, this is one of the big differences in the prison now also and I'm glad this question came back up because this one of the major, major things in this prison right now about this 20-21 that guys were being locked down all day long. That didn't usually exist. They

had available officers when I did my youthful offender sentence. There were officers everywhere so you didn't have to worry about being locked down all day long creating greater stress. I've seen with the windows- all of the windows are completely closed and covered so now nobody can see outside. If they're not looking at a watch, you don't know what time it is. You don't know if the sun is up--or if the sun is down and it's driving guys absolutely crazy. I've seen sane guys say, "Oh, they got to do something. Oh, they got to do something with this." Just because they can't see outside of the building. It feels just like a dungeon. It feels so cold sometimes and do not let there be a—If there's a flood inside of any prison system, that's where it really, really gets ugly. You can feel the coldness, you can feel the ugliness of the place.

The main thing I liked was right here. To see guys come into prison and are motivated to do something with their own lives, that are motivated to touch other people lives. That's what I liked most with guys coming into prison. To see young guys picking up books, not just any kind of book, not just a novel, just any novel reading a non-fiction book that is striving to tell you something about life. How some of the guys treated themselves, each other. This idea of you versus me always sticks in their head even with officers, it's always you versus me. Them, us. With the prisons, it's the same thing, them, us. Not even just with them versus officers. It's them versus other prisoners as well and that gets really, really ugly. I've had to stand between 200 guys, stopping 200 guys from killing each other, all of them got knives, all of them got knives longer than normal blades. They can

get them. As long as there's metal in the prison, they're going to be able to get weapons. That's not a thing they're going to be able to ever do away with unless you just lock down 24 hours a day. Excuse me.

To see these guys just trying to kill each other, to see blood everywhere because these guys are stabbing each other, that's not a pretty sight. To see officers that don't care whether or not they kill each other or not, senseless. There's no compassion whatsoever. I've seen some really, really ugly stuff. I see some really ugly stuff in prison that I don't think nobody should see ever. I've had to stop a guy in the prison system and the people at the prison I was at at the time, they gave me a pat on the back because I stopped a dude from molesting somebody one time.

A little boy, he just got into prison, he started feed him and feed him and feed him. That's the kind of stuff I'm talking about right there. Stuff you don't want to see. The stuff that nobody really, really get to see. The reason why they couldn't do nothing at all because nobody ever reported it. That's the stuff I'm talking about right there. I've seen some ugly stuff in there. I've seen really, really good officers. I've seen a officer one time, a guy was stabbing this guy in the stomach, standing here with this makeshift knife. I seen the officer jump in between them, risking his own life to stop him from trying to--Those are the kind of people I like to meet right there. Those are the kind of people that need to be in the system working, employed by the system because they are the ones who can make a difference. People come into this-- I've seen guys stabbing each other officers

outside of the door, the door locked, would not come in here and would let them kill each other. I've seen some ugly stuff in there.

I wasn't able to get in pre-release, however, they put me on a pre-release unit because I met the time limit. Other than that, I didn't participate in a pre-release program. However, again, I was always in programs. I was always happy to try to build programs and still to this day, at times I'm called back to the chaplain at the prison to talk to him from time to time. I've maintained those relations with him. I was teaching in something called the Rastafarian community. I was teaching history I was teaching politics religion, economics, sociology, psychology. I was teaching all of that, ethos, some other stuff. I think that's what prepared me.

You don't have to read anything if you want to do right. Want to do right compels you to do right. If you feel that sense of that true ethic of doing right, you got to do it. You don't need me here to tell you what some book or some person to say, this is the right way to behave. You don't need that. If you want to do right, something internal is going to push you. The word education means to induce, to pull out of you which is already there, not to put in. You going to live right, you going to do good. A lot of good people are going to come along and help you.

P3: Well I, uh, by me being older, than every prison inmate cause the guys coming in now are in their 20 the young guy. That's what actually the African American guy that kind of when you're young. It was, it was, it was, um, I was focused. I knew what I had to do. I knew I wanted to get clean. I knew I wanted to get my relationship right with God. I knew, knew that I wanted to get my

relationship right with my family. And I knew that I will have barriers when I get out. And, the only way I could maybe equip myself for them barriers was to continue my education, which like I said, I went on ahead and got my welding certification. Um, I went on here and, um, pretty much with the, uh, Chapel Service, uh, at least three, four times in the night.

Everything, I mean, you-you lose all sense of freedom. No- you eat, I mean, you are limited on everything. You go, you come where they want you to go and come, you eat what they let you have, you um, you speak when they want you to speak, they say be quiet, be quiet. And so, I felt like, uh, I wasn't exercising much a right to be 50, a fifty- year old man. As a fifty-year old man, I was supposed to be outside, uh, running around, enjoying my grandkids, not in some prison, right? Um, being a slave to the, um, to the state of South Carolina? No.

I was in the JumpStart program. I went- the program was a yearlong. The program was weekly and it gave me, uh, it gave me, um, different thought patterns and different ways of doing things. It was Christian-based and classes were on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. So um, we're just renewing our mind and-and we're learning how to deal with anger- we learn how to deal with frustration. We learn how to- We just- just giving us a different pattern of thought.

P4: Typical day, get up, make sure your room is clean and whatnot, eat and after that, you either go outside or rest, sit on they call it 'the rock' where they watch television, or either just read. I didn't really socialize with too many people. I tried to do things that were more beneficial to me such as go to church, certain classes,

so I could be more knowledgeable, either be able to socialize with other people instead of the people I was socializing with before. I did like that fact that it gave me time to really think and try to get myself prepared for when I get out. That happened last time. Prior to that, I didn't care. It was like a little joyride or whatever you want to say.

I didn't like the gangs, the killing, the fact that you had to be on your Ps and Qs. You always had to watch your back, stuff like that. I wasn't comfortable at all especially the last time. I was in this dorm where there was a lot of gang activity, drug selling, death and stabbing. I was basically afraid. It was rough.

Well, I participated- They had computer classes. They had—What is it? Work keys. I was in a drug-addiction class, several of those. I also took Spanish because there were some guys in there and they were fluent in Spanish and English and they were teaching in class. I took a few classes in there and went to church regularly.

P5: Get up 5:30 in the morning, brush my teeth, wash my face, clean up, later on open the door, go to breakfast, come from breakfast, probably you go to school, I had to go out there and work out two hours. Wait on a recall to come back until 10 o'clock, lunchtime. After lunch, go back and work out. Later on that day I'll go down to the library till about 2:30, three o'clock and then come back.

P5: Hmm. Yeah, I got my GED. And I still alive because a lot of people, a lot of my homeboys, they get killed when they've been locked up. So, you know, jail sometime really save you.

Some time is good or sometimes it's bad. I got the GED, I still alive to tell you my story, you know, like, some people don't make it back here. Some people don't because they doing the wrong thing. You know. And it really kind of help your mental stage. You know, mentally, you know, sometime jail can break you mental. Sometimes it can make you stronger but it depends on you. It depend on how you-how you think and how long as you don't stress me thinking about the same thing over and over and over but sometimes people break down behind a girl, the family leave them, no family support. And that's why a lot of people be doing a lot of crazy things and getting into the gangs.

Being away from my family. The way, uh, officer is gonna treat you. They treat you like you-- I do nothing. Talk, like nothing. I-- you really, really disrespectful. Really, they really disrespectful, like-like, they bring in problems from home to the jail, you know, and do things like that. Like there's a lot of things they do that they don't supposed to do, you know? Or really like.

P6: Um, I guess for the most part what-what-what-what got me through, you know, my 13 years was, uh, I was pretty much a loner. Um, I was pretty much a loner, but a typical day was I don't know it-it was like unexpected. You never knew, you know, how your day was gonna go, uh, whether it's, you know, uh, the staff members, you know, uh, or whether it's just other inmates, you know, other inmates or what not. Um, as far as you don't know if there's gonna be a stabbing, a riot, a fight, um, if somebody is gonna, you know, you know, bring, uh, you know, drama your way. Um, whether a staff member is gonna, you know, go out

their way, you know, to make you feel, you know, the lowest of the low or to create, you know, some, you know, some static so to speak between you.

Um, it was-- it was-- it was just unpredictable, um, you know, I still-- you know, stay, you know, in my little circumference, but still-- that still wasn't enough, you know. Um, you know telling like when you might be a victim. You know, I wasn't a gang member, um, I didn't do-- you know, I wasn't involved in none of that stuff, so, by you standing along, you pretty much you-you are a victim, you know.

P6: Um, uh, I think I can-- I-I can actually say I can, um, um, the mindset of-of-of a lot of guys-- a lot of guys I dealt with, um, a lot of people want to change their life, you know. They wasn't, you know, proud-proud of the lifestyle they lived, um, and they just wanted to do better. Um, you know, this certain institution I-- where I was at where a lot of guys was just focused, you know. Um, focused on, you know, what they was going to do when they was getting out, whether they were studying, you know, um, business books, um, you know, thinking about just what-what they gonna do, so I-I can actually say, "Yeah." Uh, that isn't-- but the trick-trick with that is, you know, everybody, you know, in the kind of prison, they, um, you know, "I want to do this. I want to do that. I want--"

You know, but, it's about anybody can say that back there, but it's like, you know, we called it selling dreams. Anybody can sell you a dream, but it's like, "What you gonna do when you actually get out?" And that's-- that-that-- that's the biggest challenge.

Uh, the dog eat dog mentality. Um, I-I-I really dislike-- I really had a problem with, um, black on black violence. Um, like I say, you know, like I said, I wasn't-- I wasn't affiliated, so I used to watch, you know, gang members just-just-just prey on the weak. You know, I see that daily, um, you know, guys-- You might get into it with-with one guy, you know, whether he's affiliated or not. You know, he might be from the same geo-geographical area in the state, but you might get into it one guy and you and one guy are arguing and then one guy turn into-- you got to fight 20 of them, you know. So, um, I-I-I really have a problem with, you know, black on black violence, you know even on-- in society, I really don't see why, you know, why we're at each other's necks you know for nothing. Um, so that-that's something that I really had a problem with. That was- that was probably at the top of my list.

Emergent Theme 3: Community returned to after Release

The third theme, *community after release*, emerged in the participant descriptions of their lived experiences. Participants described how the surroundings that they were released to after prison have an affect on their ability to transition back into society. The problem that exists is that most ex-offenders return back to areas which harbor the same existing social, economical and emotional challenges that they were plagued with prior to their incarceration (Simmons, 2016). Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as presented below:

P1: It's a lot different. What I'll tell you, it's a lot more people doing senseless crime out here. They was doing it before I left, but now it's just more

people dying. It's a lot of robberies. Change is the killing that's going on, unnecessary. Whatever it is, but somebody died yesterday at the store. There wasn't even the person who was supposed to be dying. That's straight bull stuff. A lot of young dudes out here, they still don't have nothing for them to do. They get all these little drugs they got going on. Just acting crazy. Not getting no jobs, so they want money. If they can't sell those, they're going to rob. That's the only two options that they did. Just the change, there's a lot of killing. There's a lot of people dying now, a lot. It's a lot of us really. I don't have to say it. I wouldn't care if it was White or Black, but just a lot of our people dying.

P2: I've seen economic growth and just in the area alone to see more buildings. There is some kind of economic growth there. However, the people are still struggling there, the people are still suffering there. They're suffering terribly in that community. Some people say you don't really well, but just look at the building, the quality of the building, how buildings are taken care of, the trash areas or let's say the condition of the place you live in. You don't go to suburban areas and see trash on the ground.

Go to my community. You see the absolute opposite of everything that you've seen in the suburban areas. Absolute opposite. I've worked in this lodging back then, and while I'm there, the homeless guys or whatever kind of guys, they won't come there when I am there, but immediately upon me leaving, then they'll come, and then you find a beer bottle here, beer bottle there. If you don't stay on it, that would turn into another Dukedale.

You constantly have to do that, constantly do that, to ensure that it doesn't turn into that. That's how we build communities or places are torn now. You go to those places and fix them up and ensure they can stay there and let nobody run you away to ensure that those places turn back into areas that's going to do something for the community. Because what is the use of having a building in a community that is not serving it? There is no use to having it. Is there help? Of course, it's there to put money in your pocket, but it's there to the community.

P3: Well, I had to see why some people say it changed. But remember for me, I was in 14 months. And uh-uh, society didn't change. I mean, I, uh-uh-uh, it is getting a little better. I think it's gotten better because um-um, I thought that uh, um, the laws have changed. Uh-uh, when I went in, people weren't hiring people with felony records. They didn't want a convicted felon. Now, if you are a convicted felon and you're in a program, you're doing good, "Well come on, I'll give you a job."

P4: Actually, I didn't go back to live. I went to visit. They were the same. The people were the same, they was doing the same thing and expecting me to do the same thing I used to do. Once they realized that I had changed, it was like, they pushed me away. They didn't want to be around me. I've been called boujee. Yes, they were the same. They're still the same.

P5: Everything different, right? Because you got a 12-year-old carrying a gun, 13-year-old carrying a gun. You've got 14-year-old doing the killing now.

And they did it like the-the-the-- It's like generations getting younger killing each other and they know all the guys who do the school set in-in-in the, um, detention center. It's a juvenile life and they'll be right back out after they turned a certain age. And I mean like-- It's like life priceless. They ain't worth nothing no more. Their aim is not worth nothing no more and it's like, "Do you wanna be around that?" Because you got a lot of people trying to make the statement as, "Oh, young boy is trying to make a statement."

"I'm-I'm gonna kill that big dude. I'm gonna kill this side and this side. Do you know what I mean? Or even the big dog got to hurry." And they wanna have that reputation-of doing something like that. So, it was like, "Oh, yeah, I got that reputation 'cause I did that when I'm nine years old." So, with all that and you don't know who is who, stay away from them. And I mean and I kinda like I really ain't going back down in the hood 'cause, you know, like I hear we'll go home. I hear we're going, "Why go try to check it out?" I don't want that. I don't need that because they've been like little kids like-like they'll be like, "What's up, Little G?" "Hi, what's up?" "Do you remember me?" "No." And they already get like, "Those? What do you mean like those?" You know what I mean like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah." You know what I mean? Like, "I don't even know you but you know me. I don't even know you." You know what I mean? And that's how I live. That's how I going on now like you gone for a long time you come back but you don't know who was who. You don't know them but they know you.

P6: I mean, as far as business opportunities and stuff, I mean, of course, they're advancing and they're building-building the walls in certain areas. Um, you know, people are still the same. It's sad, you know? Nobody-nobody has advanced, everybody is still stuck in the same boat, with the same-same individuals, the same guys I knew, they still doing the same thing. We're the same age and it's like, "No way I want to still doing the same thing." You know, um, they-they still doing the same thing, uh, people are still the same. You know, nobody, it's like nobody has thought outside the box, you know? Everybody is comfortable, um, in their own environment. You know, nobody wanna change they're just stuck in, you know, comfortability, so to speak.

Emergent Theme 4: Fears and Worries after Release

The fourth theme, *fears and worries after release*, emerged as an essential challenge for participants as ex-offenders described how their thoughts about the obstacles they faced after release had a direct impact on their transition back into the community after their release from prison (Lindley, 2014). Participants described their feelings and attitudes surrounding the reentry process and if they would be deemed a failure based on the challenges they faced or if they would be able to succeed after they were released back into the community. Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as outlined below:

P1: Probably depression. I ain't going to lie. To get out and be struggling basically to make it down there in South Carolina when they release you, you're going to have nothing. They don't give you money. You don't have clothes or

somebody to bring you clothes. You've go to leave with something that they give you. It was a bad experience. Just like I'm saying, every day when I was there, I was worrying about will I be able to make it. That's what I was scared of as it got closer will I be able to fight for myself because they ain't going to give me nothing when I leave.

I heard stories and it was scary you know. I'm glad I had a support system. If I didn't just like a lot of dudes that don't have it, it's hard. It's real hard. It's hard. They just throw you out there. You don't have no IDs no stuff they just give you a prison card.

P2: There's no such thing as an alternative. Either you are going to do this-No. Aint' no such this as either. You going to do this. I don't see no other way because to see another way is to say I'm not certain that it's going to turn out this way. I'm not certain in what I'm going to do. I have met God. I used to walk around the prison system and ask officers all the time and guys in prison, "What can I learn to make me stay in society that I can do with my hands? What can I learn?"

What kind of trade, skill can I learn? Can I go to electricity? Can I be a mason? These were things I went looking for. I got an officer. He wasn't an officer. I won't say officer, because he was an employee, but he worked in horticulture. This guy, he was the final one that broke the straw for me. That really made it bing, jump in my head. I was like, "Sir, if you don't mind me asking you, what can I learn that I can take back to society with me to not just be in society with,

but to help me become a productive citizen of society and contribute?” He said, “Find your trade.” It was the same old spill I’ve been hearing. Soon as he said, find your trade. I said, “Ugh.” He said, “Find you a trade you love.” He said because everything you love you give your all to.

P3: Okay, well, um, yeah, I am in doubt. Uh, okay, so let me think about doubts.

Yeah, I have some doubts. But the doubts that I have don’t have nothing to do with the doubts that I have now. All right I’m 51, I’ve got to get my 401K up and running. I’m tired that’s my only doubt other than that I’m good.

P4: I was ready to leave because of the situation, but I didn’t know what to expect when I go out. I knew it was going to be something different. It was going to be challenging, but I didn’t know exactly where I was going, or who I was going to be around and things like that.

I was doubting the sincerity of the staff. I just wasn’t accustomed to the loving and the support. Yes. I wasn’t accustomed to that. I was, what is it they want? That was on my mind for a while and I sat there and they probably would just mention. I was real quiet. I was observing to see what was going on. But I always participated and what not. But I was real quiet, real quiet. Just trying to figure out was this true and to see what’s their motive behind this. It was that façade that I thought they had at the time. But it wasn’t it was genuine.

P5: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I had a lot of worries. Worrying every day. Oh, yeah, I’m worrying every day because, you know, the system- the system is so crooked. It is crooked to the point like, you know, they’re doing you wrong. They know they’re

doing wrong but they're still going to send you to jail. You don't make it back. If you make it back you make it back but if you don't, they narrow on you.

So, which means you got there you got to state your case, and when you state your case now you find different things like, you know, so you're finding a whole break now you got to take this write up. They only got up to a year to answer. Now they go answer 263 days. They're going to answer it. That's how long it takes. They-they-they keep prolonging and prolonging this is like why are they doing it? Then next thing you know, they are sending for three years you're going to get the same years now you've got like more year to go. They get just about all the time, oh yeah, I ain't home two months early. And I got to go to the house and be like, "Yeah, happy, yeah." But why go through the day-to-day, they do things just to put you in jail, like you know, and that's wrong, you know.

P6: You know, if my family was going to be able to—um, if they was gonna be able to, um, just provide the-the-the basic necessity that I would need, you know, shoes, clothes. Um, you know, um, that I have a place to stay. Um, that's- that's, that was my biggest worry, that was my biggest-biggest worry.

Um, um, again, just-just being a productive citizen, you know? Um, just, um, actually just being, you know, would I be successful, you know, obtaining a job and all the necessities you need to be a everyday, uh, law abiding citizen?

Emergent Theme 5: Role of Programs

The fifth theme, *role of programs*, emerged as the participants revealed an in-depth detail of their reentry process as it related to the program and their perspective of

what they experienced. Participants described how their participation in the reentry program helped them transition back into society based on the level of services provided by the program (Gill & Wilson, 2017). Participants offered their perspectives on how the reentry program services assisted with their needs and challenges after being released from prison and returning back into society. Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as detailed below:

P1: Yes. I'll say that second week in our class I was still probably more intense. I was a little angry. I think I wanted stuff to happen quicker than what it was doing because the program had it where we couldn't use phones, we couldn't work, we couldn't do nothing for the first 30 days so that right there was a shock to me but I knew he said it before I first got there that they had it set up where you couldn't do nothing. That they wanted us to have our IDs, social security cards and once they go through all that so when we do start working, we weren't going to have to take time off or none of that.

When it finally came, everything started rolling you know what I mean? I think it was two weeks I tried to work in the woodshop that J. got and what was interesting and I told him I'd do it but this is not me right here. Two weeks later, I think I was at two weeks he ended up finding me a job getting paid day for day. I just felt blessed because the program supposed to be 30 days before we do anything but I was out two weeks. Somebody called me into the office, wanted somebody to come and do some work and they called me. They asked me, I was like, "Yes."

It felt real good. Didn't look back since then. The first week went by quick after that. Once I started working, it went by quick. First week, first two weeks was rough. Real rough. It ain't like J. wasn't right. It was just a lot. There was an understanding. I didn't really want to hear nothing. After being locked up. Couldn't nobody say nothing to me. Still walking around with a chip on my shoulder but then you know B. he helped me out a lot though. I just started reading the bible again asking God giving me directions, started listening. You know what I'm saying, stuff like that started working out good for me then. Real good.

I started going to church. I was able to budget money, something that I wasn't good at doing. They would save money, something I wasn't good at doing either. Other than my sister, I would say the program kept me grounded. My attitude changed toward the program too. B. and J., they started opening up more.

P2: I chose S. Some, they're saying, "Go to S." Then also, like I mentioned before, well, I talk to chap at Patoka, told me, he said, "Mr. J. is a good man. He said, "That's the program for you." He said, "I'm telling, if you'd like to go into, right a little bit, or get off the radar sometimes." He said, "But that's the program for you."

That's why I chose S. Then I talk to J. His spirit was so grabbing. He was like, "This program is definitely for you." He was so warm, and I could identify with him. When I asked him the question, I was like I need to know one thing. I need to know of the people over the program, at least they have family members or

close associates or something or they themselves have experienced incarceration, because it's impossible for you to tell me what the experience is like if you've never been there. Now, you can read it all day long. Let me tell you something. It's going to be more powerful because it's always coming through the lens of somebody else.

It was warm. S. was warm because everybody was welcoming. Everybody here was like, "Come on in, man." Showing you this, and showing you that.

Everybody was helping you out, but once you step outside of S., and that you go out into the workforce, and try to find a job, toy with ideas about how are you going to get a job and stuff like that. That's when you start to see a difference.

P3: I was happy to be out and the celebration to me haven't taken place yet.

Because, um-um, I-I went from prison to here. And-and-and believe me coming here was above my expectation. But you don't come here to celebrate. You come here to get your life together. So, I mean, and-and-and I'm learning how to live life-This is what I can say, I'm actually learning how to live a life, um, clean.

A life where you can be asset to the community. And that's basically what I'm doing here. I'm uh, I go to work every day, I attend my classes. I attend church.

This is what I've been doing for the month that I've been out. I attend classes, I attend church, I go to work every day and uh-, I save my mind.

P4: I was concerned about where I was going, how things were going to be because, really, I lived out of my comfort zone, but this was the first time I really

took a plunge at it. I was really concerned, nervous, eager to see what was what. Once I got out and came where I was now, I'm curious. I wanted to know what's going on, trying to see how I can take the people that I was around.

The longer I was out, I began to realize that the people at S. were genuine, and that they didn't have no ulterior motive. Being around the previous crowd, you was always thinking that there was an ulterior motive, that it was something they wanted, but they wanted the best.

S. assisted me in getting a job. I had experience in cooking and whatnot, and so it was nothing that I didn't want to do, so they assisted me with that. Once I got there, got in the door, I felt as though I had to prove that I'm just as good as the next man that has not been to prison, that I'm capable of doing this job just as well or even better than someone else. I think I have proven myself on that level at my job.

P5: One of the federal prosecutors sent me to this program. And when he sent me here, he sent me here and he'd be like, you know, they're trying to like, you know, I'm the first person that came to this program so it was like it might have been successful. This might open doors for them to send other people here, you know, and probably instead of sending them through the system they're gonna send them here, you know and try to work this, how to work things like that, you know.

You know what I mean? So that like my mind already made up because when you like- All right like I just learn about careers. I aint' had a career, yeah. Imma sell

drugs to make a career out of selling drugs all right but when you, uh, career once you get to understanding the career like there are a lot of things- I knew but I got knowledge of. But unless that I didn't have the understanding. Once I get to understanding everything, everything kinda like it seems like the cut the moonlight.

Like now I understand that a career, it's not anymore like-it does I can make a hundred and- a \$100,000 a year just driving. I'm the type of person like curious. You know, what I mean? If somebody says, "You know you can make a \$100,000 driving a truck. "I'm gonna go driving your truck so Ima see where you make those \$100,000. You know what I mean. And that's the type of person. And I also- If I wanna see it, I'm gonna put my heart into it and that's what I'm gonna go and that's how I blend.

P6: Uh, I was inquiring about different transitional houses, um, so a guy, um, that I was incarcerated with, he, um, referred me to another guy that was actually out and went through this, um, actual, uh, transitional housing. I don't know if I actually knew him, but I just had to see his face and he referred me and you, know I got accepted.

So you know, I was I had a bit of paranoia. Um, again will I be successful? Will I be able to find a job? Uh, just basically that, you know, just you know will I be successful? That's my biggest thing. Um, I started planning, like you know making business plans, um, things of that nature, you know.

Emergent Theme 6: Societal Reactions

The sixth theme, *societal reactions*, emerged as the participants described how reactions by members of society have affected their post-prison experiences. Participants proclaimed that the reactions from members of society varied from expressions of positivity or negativity in some cases while transitioning back into the community with the label of ex-offender. Each participant expressed his perception that, despite having served the time for their crime, he was still faced with the varying opinions from members of society (Taylor, Reuben, Miller, Mouzon, Keith & Chatters, 2016). They described their experiences of dealing with societal reactions associated with the label of ex-convict after being released from prison and returning back into society. Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as detailed below:

P1: No. I really don't. Well, my ex-wife. She is more nicer. That's crazy. She's more nicer now than she was before I went in. We couldn't get along. We couldn't see eye to eye. I guess it was my attitude. I guess it had a lot to do with me. When I first went in, I was more angrier than I am now. That's the only person.

P2: Yes, I never really had that. Now, I can honestly say that I've never had nobody say that. They haven't treated me differently. It's actually been the actual opposite. I beat, I'm leaning on the opposite. Outside, the people with all this, they stigmatize you. I've seen people go-seemed like going the extra mile to help, but again, it is not specific of any race and any ethnicity. It's simply people care.

P3: No, first of all you got to remember something too. I haven't been anywhere but here. So, I haven't met anyone. Other than the people here and we're all in the same boat. For the people at the people at the transitional home and they know that I was in prison and the people at work, for they know that I'm coming out of prison. My girlfriend, I had her before I went to prison. So she knows I went to prison.

P4: Well, here very curious. They like to know from the circle that I'm in now they've been wanting to know things about it. It's not that they treat me any differently. They just curious about what transpired how things went. The stereotype I'm not the typical stereotype I was someone that just got out of prison, so that they trying to figure out the cost of getting to know me. I think that I'm treated like I've never been that is at the work area. I tried to present myself as if I have never been to prison, even though the experience that it was a learning experience for me. It took a little bit of time for me to really learn that this is not the place for me. I tried to present myself as if I hadn't been to prison. Not that I'm ashamed of it, but it's just I don't want to be labeled as he been to prison or you can look at me and say, he just got out of prison.

P5: You really can't tell cause they'll be like, "Oh yeah." Oh, all right. All right. How much time? Oh, okay. Okay. Like when you run into a group of people who ain't never did time before, and you say that, when you turn your back they'll be like, "Oh, he did time before." You know, they'll act funny. You know what I mean? That's why I say like, it depends. It could be those two of

them. They'll be like, "Oh yeah, it was cool." But when there's a group of them and you got them three who disagree and they kind of don't care, they don't go with them. It's like they gonna follow each other.

P6: Uh, as far as strangers, um, I mean, once people learned, I was, you know, um, you know, just released from prison. Um, it wasn't- it wasn't like- like I said it was accepted, you know? Uh, it wasn't like they was judgmental or, you know, uh, I was frowned upon or anything like that. It was- it was like, "Hey, you know, it's good you're out." You know.

Um, like I said, when I'll be experiencing, um, like a situation with the kiosk, um, I pretty much told the, uh, cashier. I was like, "Hey you know, um, I'm new at this." So, they was like, "Uh, what do you mean you're new at this?" So, I was like, "I just got out of prison, you know?" So, they was like, "Oh, wow, you know, how much time did you serve? Blah, blah, blah. Um, uh, I think another incident. I went- I went to the mall to try to talk to this one girl and uh, I told her- I said, um, I just told her, I went, "Man, listen, I just got out of prison, you know?" And, um, she was like, you know, um, "You know, glad you out." Um, don't go back, um et cetera, et cetera. Um, so people, uh, like I said, I wasn't- I mean, I don't go out broadcasting I've been in prison.

Emergent Theme 7: Challenges/Barriers after Release

The seventh theme, *challenges/barriers after release*, emerged as the participants described the difficulties they experienced immediately after their release from prison.

Participants verbalized each of their individual lived experiences and how the

challenges/barriers they each faced have affected their post-prison experiences. Each participant expressed their experiences with the reentry process as it related to employment, housing, financial challenges, shift in technology and how each played a pivotal role in their ability to transition back into society (Doughtery, 2017). Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as detailed below:

P1: Just filling out my application. I think one time, they was going to hire me, said it was too long. I said yes on the back, I ain't going to lie. They said they deal with ex-con offenders. I was going to have a job and all that. This is like I always say, just they dangle me, worrying about, they're going to say yes or no. It was like I had the job and all that, then the day of, they're supposed to contact me, assignments. "J., we see you have this felony I was like, I told you that." Why would you just lead me on thinking that you deal with ex-offenders. You know what I mean? The rejection, I hate rejection. That's something I'm still trying to- I know everybody hate rejection, but I feel like I took it hard but when I got back here, I was out of work for two weeks, then lucked out with that incident with that lady. The same day, one door closes another opens. A hour later, the lady called me and said she got an interview for me. She said, "I hear you ran by me by accident this time, ran my background, but you're all right." I said, "All right then." How I ended up where I'm at now.

When I was there and they came and said, "We'll help you get this, we'll help you do this or we will help you get some clothes and this and that." You get out, didn't do nothing for us. Me and the other dude, they didn't do nothing for us.

They were saying, "Well, you can go and sign up for food stamps." They denied me on that because I had a drug charge. I was like, "Okay." They were like, "Yes, we help people that get out of prison get clothing." They know I had high blood pressure and they were like, "We'll help you get back on your medication", this that. Basically, they didn't do nothing. They turned their back on me. That really had me upset, really bad.

They was like, we'll give you a voucher for two pair of jeans, two shirts, and pair of boots if you get a job. So, when I got the job, they told me I make too much money. I said, "Oh, okay." Y'all are not helping nobody out here. I'm not selfish but I always sit back down now and you have brothers in there that thy don't want to come home to nothing. They're struggling. In my mind, I'm thinking, that man is going to get out, one day but where is- Who is going to help him? And you get out and these programs are supposed to so-call help, then they turn you away.

That's depressing. You've been in prison and you've cleaned up your life. You don't drink anymore. You're thinking you are going to come out and then everybody turns their back. Well, what is a man going to do? Pop a beer, smoke a joint, smoke crack. You're going to turn back into the streets, so you can come back. That's how they've got it designed. That's just my opinion.

P2: One of the things I haven't adjusted to- You know, remember I told you, I mentioned a second ago, I said sometimes I go feed his dog, my neighbor's dog, because all I've ever been around was K9s, police K9s, I love puppies, but because- This psychological thing here. This is really, really deep here. I can go

feed his dog, but I can't touch it because I've always been around police dogs. You can't touch. This barrier is there with me when it comes to touching a dog. Now, if it goes that way just touching your dog, can you imagine how many other areas which psychologically you're affected that you just don't see. The ghetto is not the ghetto- That's another thing I'd like to say. The ghetto is not the ghetto because of the things that you see. The ghetto is the ghetto because of the things you don't see that make it ugly, visibly. There's psychological things that I may be unaware of that' transpiring with me when I come across different things and circumstances, situations that I'm unaware of.

Self-serve at the grocery store. That self-serve really got me when I first got out. Some old lady's just like, "There's a bag over there. Just go over there and pay right there." I said, "How are you going to do that?"

P3: Yes, yes, yes. Basically, that was my biggest obstacle. I mean you talking about that obstacle right here. I got that obstacle like I said from the time I met parole. Which was I must say April 15th all the way to June 1st, it took me all the way to June 1st to find this place right here. So, I've got that obstacle for, uh-huh six weeks, or seven weeks before I-I could get. So that was, uh-huh that was something that, u, uh, that I'd battle. That was my biggest obstacle hope because when I got here. When I physically got here, um, I haven't done anything but let God do his work.

P4: My biggest challenge was really before I got the job that I got, was going out here trying to find one, and it seemed that though once they found out I had been locked up it was like, "Well, we'll give you a call blah blah blah."

The lady I talked to, she was very okay about it and what not that I was recently released from prison. She actually told me that it would take five years before I would be able to get an apartment over there. I said, "Five years." So what I'm supposed to do in the meantime? That was discouraging even though I took-One of my co-workers, she took me over there and look at the apartment, I which I thought was not the greatest. It was a raggedy house. And they wanted \$600.00 for that. You could just basically push the wall you need and people come in your house and whatnot, take what you want. It was sort of like a bad neighborhood.

P5: Hmm, not really. The only challenge I really had was like trying to talk to my- talk to my nieces, talk to my niece and my little nephew like because they already get older and they like it's like they don't' wanna hear what I got to say no more. He's like, "Yeah, cool, uncle, yeah, but boy listen, I ain't got to listen to you no more." And that sounded, "weren't you not going to come back?"

I was like, "Well, I ain't got to listen to you boy, who do you think you are?"

They lose all that and also like that-that-that kind of- that kind of hurt, you know, that kind of hurt me because I'm like you're arguing with me and I'm just trying to tell you something. Asking you certain things and you're arguing back with me. I'm like, "You argue, you're arguing, why don't you go be a lawyer and argue with them people in court too. Don't argue with me."

P6: Mmm. I would say, um, major barriers, um, barriers, um, you know, like you know, um, I wasn't necessarily, uh, institutionalized, but there's certain small things that-that-you-you do and still don't do. Uh, for one, I still wake up at my normal time-um, that I used to wake up in prison. Um, my first night, um, that I was in a bed like 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning—No it was about 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, I just jump up for no reason. I just jumped out of my rest. I just jumped up and I- I had to look around, like I had to realize that, you know, I was actually home because, you know, in prison if you sleep that-that comfortably some-something's not right. Something's not right. Um, you know, when I got in the shower I still wasn't you know, I'm in a transitional home, so, uh, you know, maybe in my own home, but I still will not get in nobody's shower, uh, where there's a lot of people using it just barefooted. I can't do it. I need to wear shower shoes, so like I say, there wasn't no uh major barriers, um, I don't know.

And it's like I had to actually order my stuff from the kiosk machine. You know, I pretty much knew how to- I mean, I already know that, you know, touch the screen and things of that nature, but, uh, there's some troubleshooting with, um, as far as I kept ordering like the extra sauce- and I was trying to figure that out and then, uh, you know, I'm used to, um, you know, I'm used to, um, like once I make my purchase, you know, I thought I was done right then and there, but once I made the purchase, I got to go to the cashier and I got to take the ticket and go to her, you know, go to the, uh, take the receipt to the, uh, actually, up front and give her the receipt.

Emergent Theme 8: Family Relationship/Social Support

The eighth theme, *family relationship/social support*, emerged as the participants described their lived experiences regarding their family relationship/social support.

Participants detailed an account of how their family relationship/social support affected their ability to transition back into society after their release from prison (Kotova, 2015). Each participant told the stories of how their family relationship/social support systems helped with finding work, providing clothing and shelter or financial support and the role this played in their readjustment back into society after their release from prison. Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as detailed below:

P1: Where I stay, it's just me and my mother, my sister. They were there for me when I got home. When I got out on parole, could of have stayed in and finish my time up but they was wanting me out of there. I think two years ago, there was a big riot in the prison down here. They scared so they was thinking I was part of that. There was seven people who died and 20 something people got injured. They was like we need to get you home. So when I was out for parole I wasn't going to take it, but they was like, "No, we need you to go here, so get you of there." I was like, "All right." My support has been better. I told them both, "You all did the time with me, and I thank you for that." Tell them, "It'll never happen again. That's the last time for your son and brother.

Kid's mother, we cool, we getting along for them. She's not having no beef with me. Seeing the kids or being with them. I don't understand why she was mad because I left the way I left. That's all in the past. I said everything that I do now,

it's for them and my children. It doesn't matter about me no more. It's about them. So, if I leave early to have something for them. That's my goal. To work and hand them something. Prison was crazy. Like you said, "You get to find out who you are as a person. You really do. Never thought I'd say that but you really do.

P2: Got a lot of important people in my life right now, I would have to say my lady. My lady is my rock. That's my everything. I will have to say my lady and her kids. My instructors at school, they are out of sight. They're all awesome. My boss man, absolutely fabulous guy. They just came along the way, people I didn't know. Except for my lady, I've known her since high school. The people came along, they were great people. Miss D., can't deny her. She's a gem. I've got a few good people in my life but particularly my lady. She's my rock. She's my everything.

I was-me and my lady and my family was walking downtown last Friday. As I was walking behind my family and looking at my family, my lady, her daughter, her other daughter, her son, her sister, her sister's girlfriend, her kids, so I'm walking with all these people behind them and I'm looking like, "Wow." Because I decided to come to G., that entire family's whole life is changed and all you hear is, "You're doing great", I'm just talking about my lady. "Oh, you're doing fantastic.

I went hiking in the mountains last week. It was so beautiful; my neighbor is mixed because everybody's just giving me blessings. Everybody's pretty good

because I do things like this. I always read that your house don't stop at your doorstep, your neighbors, those are your houses too. Like my neighbor would go out of town. I just go and cut his grass. My neighbor, he might get up. He might be gone or he may be in the house. I go get his trash can and put it out front. I just go feed his dog. Things like that matter. Because you're not looking for nothing in return.

P3: So, the response of my family is, "Are you gonna stay out this time?" Are you gonna do all right? I mean- and I mean and I mean they call me, um, uh, they call me 24 hours a day. Just to, uh-uh, they knew I was not answering the phone I was gone. You know what I mean so I guess everybody did it. After like they rooting for you, you know, as a matter of fact, uh. My brother was talking about coming down this weekend to see me he wanted to see me now. So, I mean he's- he's excited for me, you know. Yes. Do I feel differently about my family? Yeah, I do, uh-uh-uh, I just wanna love on them now. Before I was loving on the dope let me love on my family, yeah, I feel different.

P4: It was positive. I had a lot of positive responses. They was glad I was out and whatnot. Few numbers here and numbers there, we talked and whatnot. I even met a brother that I hadn't met all my life. I just met him last year. On my father's side. They invited me to family functions.

My current employer, he was hesitant on hiring me because of my past he would actually tell me you that, he told me. I hounded him a little bit and he finally gave me the interview, and he said at the interview I blew him away. After that, with S.

giving me the opportunities to speak on panels. It's in the newspaper, they did a small skit on me, it's somewhere on the internet somewhere. They would come to my job and we would do interviews up there too.

P5: No, my family, they was happy I came home. They was happy. My family- They've been happy I came home because you know they was on my side which I feel like they was. You know, he really helped me out. He really, you know, like the solicitor could have changed up. You know, to like-like-like- my POI came and talk to me after-after they gave me the work around the probation and all like that. He came and talk to me. Him like, "You know-you-you know you're lucky right?" I said, "What you mean?" He said, "You know you could have changed around. You know you could have um, withdrawn your plea, right?" I'm like, "How you mean?" Uh, he said, "No." Him like, "Yeah, he could withdraw it." Because what happened the law changed, the law had changed three days before I go in the court. That's one way how I got out.

The law had changed 3 days before I went to court. And he said the judge could have pulled back my plea cause the law changed and give me way over time. Yeah, but him like they have been in the judge's chamber talking. And he said, "Man, listen let me tell you something." He said, "I- I never see that much people talk about a-a-a criminal." I never see that much people talk about some boy. He be like man listen, "Them boy really been and they're talking good about you." I'm like, "Oh, really?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "Man, listen," And I never had that even a solicitor had nothing bad to say about you.

Solicitors say people were coming in and out talking to them trying to get you out of jail. I never see that before. I'm like, "You serious?" Yeah, you see like they really help you. Like he really wanted to help you. He really cut you loose. I'm like, "Dawg, well that's good." He said, "Boy, don't come back." He said, "Don't come back. You need to do some things in life. S's right.

P6: Um, everybody, um it's like it went both ways. It was like, you know, um, a double-edged, uh, sword. It was like, uh, they rejected me and, um, I rejected them as well. Um, I, can just, you know, foresee like, I can just- I can just see-I can just detect the drama, you know, uh, just, you know, a bunch of negativity up in here, so I just chose just to- just-just- just let everybody be their own person. We're all grown, you know, you know, they got lives to live and I got a life. I got to live too.

I'm out now, so, um, it's-it's just- I chose-I just chose to cut everybody off. I don't have it. I haven't-I haven't, I-I wasn't out 20 minutes, you know, and it was already drama presented my way already. I'm like, "Wow." You know, so I just chose to just, "Hey, I'm good." I've pretty much been alone my whole life anyway. Uh, I pretty much lived, you know, in quite a few states, so, uh, where I didn't know nobody, so I've pretty much been alone, so I'm cool with that.

Emergent Theme 9: Religious Beliefs

The ninth theme, *religious beliefs*, emerged as the participants described their lived experiences regarding their religious beliefs. Participants detailed an account of how turning to faith helped them to gain strength during prison as well as during the

reentry process (Mandhouj, Aubin, Amirouche, Perroud & Huguelet, 2014). Each participant shared their perspectives of how their belief in a higher power brought them comfort during difficult times and the role that attending church services, participating in bible study groups and faith-based classes played in their readjustment back into society after their release from prison. Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as detailed below:

P1: None. Only thing, I ain't gonna lie. I say what I like. I got a relationship with God. A real relationship. I had a relationship with God, which I thought before I went in, but I was able to read the Bible and it had more- In there, you don't have nothing to do but read, then pray, talk to God, and He'd talk back to you. That was the only best thing I got out of the whole experience, was him being there for me. I follow God. A man of God.

Keep praying to God. Ask him for guidance. He'll get you through it. He will. Keep your faith in God. Pray to him and he will guide you through all of it. Don't be rough with it because he will come through.

P2: I was always happy to build programs and still to this day, at times I've called back to the Chaplain at the prison to talk to him from time to time. I've maintained those relationships with him. I was teaching in something called the Rastafarian community. I was teaching history. I was teaching politics, religion, economics, sociology and psychology. I was teaching all of that, ethos, some other stuff. I think that's what prepared me. You have to live right, you going to do good. A lot of good people are going to come along and help you.

I studied a lot of Afrocentricity when I was in prison because, again, I grew up in the era where there was a lot of consciousness. Some of the seeds fell on me. Some of the seeds were there and planted. It's just how it's cultivated. When I got into prison where time was what it will mean, where I didn't have to struggle to survive, make ends meet. That's the only thing prison gives you. Prison gives you time. With that available time, you can either waste it or use it for good. Again, I pushed to do that. I thank God what I pushed to do so because now you are a young man now. You are right. You are on the right path now.

P3: This program it actually built my faith in Christ. And I guess basically well, God is helping me get my life back in order. Right here is Christian-based. And they, uh-uh, they uh-uh, they do this renewing of the mind. So, they believe in God to renew your mind even for a drug addict. And basically, I have to agree with them because I haven't had any type of formal treatment. Nor do I have any type of desire. Um, that's a miracle in itself.

Let me use the word. We never had a chance to rehabilitate hence, ah-ah- ah-, what the Bible says God says, "See and taste that I'm good." They never really had the opportunity to taste how good God is. I definitely believe in God. Oh, God is always happening in my life.

P4: Well, the answer is God. That's the only person I really have, who's with me right now. I've always believed in God, but I didn't really practice going to church and actually listening, praying or just thanking God for just waking up this morning. I really wasn't into that. My thing was five today. I'm getting ready to

get me a hit. That's what I will get up to think about. Now that I knew that was I had to find me like a half-hour or something to cling on to, to move forward and being that I don't feel like y'all you got to have some type of religion in your life to keep you focused and keep you grounded.

P5: I believe in God.

P6: Um, I was raised in a Christian household. Um, prison kind of made me like uh I don't know, it's kind of me, it kind of made that part of my life shallow. Um, I'm still a good person at the end of the day, but uh religion aspect. I really don't know. I-I because like, when you in prison, you just, you got a lot of guys converting and things of that nature. You, um, you read, well, you read it, read in all type of religious um you know, um material things of that nature and—um I always struggled, that's me personally, even for when I was out I'd struggle with um church and things of that nature. Um, um but um it's hard to say, I mean, I-I guess if people ask that I tell them, I'm a Christian, you know.

Emergent Theme 10: Strong Will/Determination to Succeed

The tenth theme, *strong will/determination to succeed*, emerged as the participants expressed their desires to succeed outside of prison during the reentry process. Participants conveyed that the circumstances of their incarceration and their challenging post-prison experiences engendered their strong will and determination not to return back to prison (Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson & Gordon, 2016). Despite the obstacles to transition back into society they all stated that returning to prison was not an

option they wished to experience but they did desire an opportunity for a second chance.

Related to this theme, the participants described their lived experience as detailed below:

P1: I don't want to be a failure. I mean going back and forth to jail cause I feel like it. I been so many times and this last incident, you may feel like you a failure, everything you worked for, it's that one second when they throw them things out of your hand, hey everything is gone out of the window. You at the bottom. That's before they bury you right there because you ain't nothing, you ain't nobody. I don't want to be a failure. You don't expect it, I'm going to make everything about my children. I don't want to be no failure. I don't want them to be looking at me like man you an ex-con. I left all that behind. I left that in prison. I left that down there.

Next month, I'm going to say in six months my goal will be to save up. I'm shoot for like \$5,000. I had a car and not a family, it was a \$600 car but I need something more than a pennywheel. About a year from now, I want to do that on my own. I know I ain't going to have my own house but you know, me in my own place. In 5 years, I got to be somewhere supervising a little warehouse. That's my job right there. I'm aware I've been knowing that all my life but I want to be a supervisor man at a little warehouse. In just five years, it seems I'll be managing a warehouse.

P2: In the next year, I'm going to have my own barbershop. That's guaranteed. The only way that don't happen is if the good Lord chooses not to do it. If the good creator says ' "No young man, we've got a better plan for you." That's the

only way that's not going to happen. But as of today, I stand here right now, I am convicted in my soul that the barbershop will be there in another year. That's definitely going to be there in another year. What's going to follow after that? I'm not certain what's going to follow after that. We can try to project the future, but we don't know what's going to happen.

I want to do something for the homies, women who are abused, particularly. I want to do something for the babies. A guy told me one time, he was working in the medical ward for babies hooked on crack cocaine. He said, "That's the ugliest sound in the word you ever want to hear." A baby crying because it want crack. Those are probably the kind of places I want to be.

If you have a vision when you left prison, stick to it. Patience and determination. You can achieve anything in the world you want as long as you got a plan which is a vision. As long as you've got that plan, you have a vision, you have patience and determination, undying determination, you can achieve whatever you want. It's all on you. If you don't take the necessary steps, it won't get done. The world is a snowflake. Every life if like a whole snowflake. It's only cast once. You need to maximize all the time you can and get it right.

P3: I ain't never going back. That's my spirit. I ain't never going back. They aint' never locking me up no more. Cause I'm not gonna give them a reason to. Just like that. I'm not gonna give them a-um, I wish I had the help I have now which I haven't had in 20 years. My goal is to um, still be working over. Still in good health. Still, like here. I'm looking forward to moving to Arkansas. Uh, uh, uh,

I'll be married and happy living out myself. I'd just be pretty happy in my own house, married and living in bliss. The old man life.

P4: I actually made the front of the news a while back. Stuff like that is motivational. I want to keep up doing what I'm doing, so I could be an inspiration to some of the other people that's been out of prison, so they can say, "He did it, I can do it too." I try to be encouraging to some of the guys that I meet that's in the program. You have to get your priorities straight. You got to live for yourself. If living else is something that you think is cool, it's not, just try and get yourself in order. Okay, it might take you some time if you didn't get your education or things of that nature, it going to take some time because ain't nothing will happen overnight.

Just go with the flow, take your time and work on it. You can't speak about it and just to hand you everything. You've got to work on it yourself because people are not just going to hand you stuff. If they do give you something, they see that you're trying to help yourself. Either get your priorities straight, try to make sure that you getting yourself together and once you get yourself together things would be a whole lot easier. Within the next few years, I see myself owning my own home, yes, that's my next goal.

P5: But I know I'm going to be doing in the next five years, I'd be looking for some land to build my house from the ground up. In five years, that's- that's what I know I'm going to be doing. If I don't be doing it, I could be on the verge of doing it. Yeah.

If it got a fear. I ain't gonna let that stop me. I ain't gonna let that stop me. I'm like being filled. I feel like the more fear you got, the more determination I got. You know cause it's like I'm scared to do but I'm just gonna do it. You know what I mean? Let me see if I really can do those you know. Like that's how- that's how I always like, you know, I love my motivation. I self-motivate. You know I motivate myself. You know like I really don't need nobody to motivate me because I know what I- I know what I can do and I know what I can bring to the table, you know- if I got somebody who will help me and motivate me and who know more than me and I can get a little knowledge from them, yeah, that would be even more better because now it's like in a competition by running the competition.

P6: Wow. Um, you know, I get, um you know once I get this job, no question. You know, get-get an apartment um you know, bill my credit. Um, I'm actually um I have several business ideas, um you know. I can't just be everywhere with it so I got to tackle ones that I feel would be more feasible, more beneficial. So, I'm definitely interested in um entering like the tech world. You know I have a couple of app ideas that I'm certain would be successful. Um, you know, uh give and take, you know, four or five years, uh when I have my own house. Um, successful company, have my own house an um who know- who knows start a family. Um, that's pretty much where I see myself.

Um, I guess my slogan, I got to tell everybody, you know. Um, life is still good. You know life is beautiful man. Um, I-I-I just feel like that just sums it up, you

know, just, just any, I mean, it sums it up in all aspects. Like life is still beautiful, is still good um. It's just, you gotta just got this, you know, remain focused you know, don't resort back to what brought you to prison.

Um, a lot of people don't understand that, you know, it's not also just people you hang out with. And like I said, is, is, is, it has something to do with the reason why I made the decision that I made as far as coming here. People don't understand family can set you back too. Family can put you on that path too you know. So, um, like I say, um, to answer your question, you know, just life is good man. Life is still good.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to discover and understand the essence of the post-prison lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have had a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegration back into society after being released from prison. The lived experience shared by each participant added insight into the reentry issues faced by African American males after they are released back into the community. I presented the results of the study in which ten themes emerged that identified common experiences and perceptions of African American male ex-offenders that exist and impact their ability to transition back into society after their release from prison. The themes identified were environment/criminal involvement, experience in prison, community returned to after release, fears/worries after release, role of programs, societal reactions, challenges/barriers after release, family relationship/social support, religious beliefs, strong will and determination to succeed.

A qualitative reflection is written for the 10 themes that emerged to provide evidence and support related back to the theoretical framework and body of knowledge. This study represents an exploration of the perceptions and lived experiences of the African American male ex-offender that resulted in an information rich description of the emotional, economic and social needs from the perspectives of African American male ex-offenders and how the stigma/shame they are faced with affects their lives as they reintegrate back into society. The lived experiences shared by these six men reveal their point of view about the barriers they have faced when trying to reintegrate back into society after their release from prison. I also describe discrepant cases and issues of trustworthiness in the data collection and analysis process.

Chapter 4 offered a detailed analysis of the various participant responses and results from the data analysis identified 10 emergent themes that represented attitudes, experiences, beliefs and perceptions of six African American male ex-offenders. Chapter 4 discussed the major themes that emerged from the participant's narratives. The themes included: (a) environment/ criminal involvement; (b) experience in prison; (c) community returned to after release; (d) fears/worries after release; (e) role of programs; (f) stigma/discrimination; (g) challenges/barriers after release; (h) family relationship/social support; (i) religious beliefs; and (j) strong will/determination to succeed.

In Chapter 5, the purpose and nature of the study was reiterated, based on the need to increase the existing knowledge of the lived experiences of African American ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations and were faced with reintegrating back into society after release from prison. Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of the

meanings and findings of the data as compared to the existing body of peer-review literature described in Chapter 2. I provided limitations for the study, trustworthiness and recommendations for further research. I explored social changes and theoretical implications. I addressed implications for positive social change at the individual, organization and social levels. Chapter 5 closed with a conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenology study explored the lived experiences of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegration into society after being released from prison within 3-5 years. The goal was to understand whether there were common experiences among these six participants.

Chapter 3 included a detailed discussion of the research method, the research design and rationale, methodology, target population and sample size, data collection and data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness. Chapter 3 provided a framework for understanding the methodology for this study on reintegration. The procedures for a phenomenological design were reviewed. Methods of data collection and analysis were included. Chapter 3 outlined conclusions about the general methods used to collect and analyze data as described.

The literature review was an overview of research studies on African American male ex-offenders who experienced incarceration and had to cope with the prisoner reentry process and the challenges of post-prison adjustment after their release. To gather information and explore prisoner reentry from the perspectives of the participants, the central research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process the transition from prison back into the community?

2. What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after release from prison, and the ability to reintegrate back into society?

Semistructured interview questions that aligned with the research questions were designed to engender responses about the lived experiences of the participants. The central research questions helped to elicit an understanding of how a history of multiple incarcerations of ex-offenders impacts a process of transitioning back into the community after release from prison. The research questions also helped to identify the role of economic, emotional, and social adjustments after an African American male ex-offender's release from prison as well as the common perceptions related to a sincere desire of African American male ex-offenders to get a second chance. Each participant conveyed how the stigma of being an ex-offender impacted their ability to find employment and housing and their determination to succeed.

In Chapter 5, the findings that emerged are compared to the literature review; the findings are interpreted; limitations of the study, recommendations for practice and future research, implications for positive social change are discussed; a conclusion captures the essence of the study is discussed.

Interpretation of Findings

In this section, each theme is discussed within a broader context of the literature review in Chapter 2. I interpreted the results and compare them to the literature review to determine whether they confirm, disconfirm, or extend the knowledge of the extent of the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their

economical, emotional and social adjustments after release from prison and how it affects their ability to reintegrate back into society. The participants expressed their experiences post-incarceration and their ability to seek housing, employment, education, job training, health care and transportation when reintegrating back into society and how these challenges ex-offenders face play a role in their ability to become productive members of society.

Theme 1: Environment/Criminal Involvement

Most researchers have focused on the density of substance abuse use/procurement locations (e.g., bars, alcohol or tobacco retail outlets) in an individual's residential neighborhood. Higher densities of substance abuse/procurement locations in a person's residential community are associated with higher use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among adolescent, young adult and minority populations (Cederbaum, Guerreo, Adhikari & Vincent, 2015). Researchers who focus on proximity, rather than density, acknowledge that individuals may travel outside of their residential neighborhood to consume alcohol or drugs with limited exceptions (Paschall, Grube & Thomas, 2014).

Paschall, Grube & Thomas (2014) indicated that proximity between place of residence and substance abuse use/procurement locations in association with increased use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs including among adolescents, young adults and minority adults. The proximity between the place of residence and substance abuse/procurement locations reduces travel time and transportation costs, allows for greater access to and heightens the visibility of alcohol or drugs, and provides opportunities for substance use and related behaviors (Paschall et al., 2014). Paschall et

al., (2014) demonstrated that, compared with those residing in closer proximity, minority club scene participants who lived further from their preferred nightclub reported higher intensities of alcohol and cocaine use. Participants residing near their preferred nightclub experienced higher frequencies of arrest for public intoxication. Individuals raised in impoverished environments are at risk of suffering or witnessing violent behavior (Paschall et al., 2014).

Individuals living in impoverished environments are more likely to be exposed to stressors such as unemployment and a lack of social and economic mobility (Rumberger, 2011). Studies have also identified a critical gender effect. African American males are exposed to a more considerable amount of adversity in their microsystem (Hackett, 2014). Most studies have shown crime is caused because of the social and economic environment (Bura, 2012). To understand how a situation can shape a mindset that has the potential to lead to deviant behavior, one's upbringing and social learning environment directly contribute to an individual's specific criminogenic needs. Such needs are traits that lead to criminal behavior (Hegger, 2015). One of the best examples of a criminogenic need that ties into the social learning environment would be criminal peers (Hegger, 2015). Such peers are those individuals who tend to coerce or indirectly affect the decision making of another (Hegger, 2015). Other factors that can be directly linked to the social environment would include child abuse, domestic violence, exposure to substance abuse, exposure to criminal activity, lack of financial stability and exposure to emotional harm (Hegger, 2015). The participants in this study alluded to their situation as a contributing factor that led them to drugs and criminal activity.

Theme 2: Experience in Prison

Each participant discussed his perception of his individual experience while incarcerated in prison. They opened up and shared their experiences of prison from their daily routines, interactions with other inmates, interactions with correctional staff and programs that they participated in during their time as an inmate. Participant 1 talked about how the typical day was the same routine where you just sit and do your time until he was introduced into a program called Spice which eventually led to him getting into the reentry residential transitional home. Participant 2 harped on how he witnessed guys in prison trying to kill each other and blood being everywhere after a stabbing. He went on to say that Officers didn't have compassion nor care whether the inmates killed each other. He recalled having to stop a guy from molesting another inmate while in prison. Participant 4 shared how there was a lot of gang activity, drug selling and stabbing and he was very uncomfortable and basically afraid for his life. Participant 5 echoed that he was still alive to tell his story and was grateful because a lot of people don't make it out of prison. He described the mental anguish and how prison can break you mentally because people break down about girlfriends and no family support.

The participants indicated that their post-prison experiences were influenced by several emotional and psychological factors associated with their incarceration. These formerly incarcerated persons experienced issues such as paranoia, anxiety, stress and sleep disorder while incarcerated. Some of the participants described bitterness, anger, lack of self-confidence, fear and the inability to make decisions on their own as some of the emotional struggles they experienced after their release from prison. The

psychological and emotional experiences of the participants were consistent with the findings of the qualitative study conducted by Daigle (2012).

Daigle (2012) found that many formerly incarcerated persons returned from prison with psychological instabilities, although they entered prison with no mental health issues. Daigle conducted an analysis of the records of more than 1,000 formerly male inmates in his qualitative study. He reported that a total of 21.25% had committed suicide, attempted suicide or engaged in suicidal behaviors after their prison release. According to Daigle (2012), the psychological and emotional effects are intensified and can be severely damaging for those who have served time in prison.

All the participants see things in a different light now and noted that while they were incarcerated all they worried about was staying alive and doing their time. At the reentry residential transitional program, participants describe the new outlook on life and how the program facilitators help you to organize your life by prioritizing what is important to you and having a plan after your experience with prison. Participants posited that it starts with being truthful to yourself how you did it, why you did it and what are you going to do so you will never go back again? Each of the participants shared how their participation in the reentry residential transitional home helped them to start building bridges that will allow them to eventually gain some trust back with the criminal justice system since their release from prison and reintegration back into society.

Theme 3: Community Returned to After Release

All the participants voiced how the surroundings that they were released to after prison have an effect on their ability to transition back into society. Participants in this

study expressed that they return back to areas that harbor the same existing social, economical and emotional challenges that they were plagued with prior to their incarceration (Simmons, 2016). Research studies have shown that most ex-offenders return to neighborhoods which revealed high crime and is disadvantaged for these ex-offenders. Participant 1 reported that the neighborhood he returned to was a lot different and there were more people out there doing senseless crimes and there was just a lot more people dying. Participant 4 touched on the fact that people were the same in his community and were involved in the same criminal activity in which they all expected him to fall back into the lifestyle but he refused to do so. Participant 5 was saddened to describe how 12- and 13-year olds were carrying guns in his community and setting out to make a name for themselves by killing people.

Studies have shown that most individuals when confined to small space (i.e., incarcerated cell) your body develop muscle memory which will not allow you to use open space (i.e., society) when you are out (Bardach, 2012). For most of these participants, as a starting point, the reentry residential transitional housing program ensured that the environment setting that they returned to was positive and promoted stability. The environment can have a significant influence on individuals' behavior (Hegger, 2015). Without question, environmental change can increase the mindset as well. A situational environment can shape a mindset which may lead to potential criminal or deviant behavior. However, by changing an individual's surroundings and social circumstances it creates a positive mindset (James, 2015). These participants expressed the importance of being in a structured environment to changing their mindset to have an

opportunity to participate in the reentry residential transitional housing program that helped shape their focus and overcome the difficulties in prison-to-community transition and reintegration (James, 2015).

Theme 4: Fears and Worries After Release

All participants articulated that their fears and worries after release from prison combined with their difficult post-prison experiences have not deterred their resilience not to return to prison. Despite the post-prison hurdles, similar to the participants in the present study, there is a resolve by many of the participants to defeat the challenges faced during the reintegration process and do whatever it takes to live a productive life outside of prison (Jenkins, 2014). Participants as ex-offenders described how their thoughts about the obstacles they faced after release had a direct impact on their transition back into the community after their release from prison (Lindley, 2014).

Participant 1 expressed as it came closer to his release date, he became depressed and worried about struggling after release and if he was going to have the basic essentials. He described being fearful and if he could survive because he knew at release that he would not receive anything. Participant 6 described his biggest worries were if his family was going to be able to provide the basic necessities like clothes, shoes and a place for him to stay upon his release from prison. Participant 4 shared thoughts of not knowing what to expect when he got out. He knew it was going to be something different and challenging but he was afraid because he didn't know exactly where he was going or who he was going to be around.

According to Meade et al. (2102), former inmates who had been incarcerated for longer periods had lower recidivism rates. Furthermore, recidivism rates lowered the longer ex-offenders were able to remain out of prison. All participants in the present study had been imprisoned for one or more years. Moreover, two of the participants had served 13 years in prison. The fears and worries of the participants and their resilience confirms the findings of studies in the literature review that many formerly incarcerated individuals go on to live productive lives (Jenkins, 2014; Meade et al., 2012). On the other hand, the study by Berg and Huebner (2011) did not confirm the fears and worries of the participants and their resilience to stay out of prison years after their release. Berg and Huebner (2011) reported that many ex-offenders returned to prison as a result of the behaviors they learned in prison, the hardships in finding employment and lack of social ties. Berg and Huebner (2011) found in their quantitative study that only ex-offenders with strong family and social ties were able to remain out of prison years after their release. In contrast, despite the social and personal obstacles faced by the participants in the present study, they had, thus far, succeeded in their resolve to stay out of prison even in the midst of facing their thoughts and fears about returning to prison if they were not successful during the reentry process.

Theme 5: Role of Programs

Prison and reentry programs are meant to influence offenders in a positive way, increasing their likelihood of being successful upon reentry into society. Participants discussed programs that they felt were beneficial to their reentry in some way. Programs that were helpful to participants were programs that delved into underlying issues for

problem thinking or behavior, increased self-esteem, increased a specific skill set, had a religious or faith-based connection or allowed participants to gain support from others who were understanding of their situation (Gill & Wilson, 2017).

Participants in the current study described facets of how the reentry program services assisted with their needs and challenges after being released from prison and returning back into society. The program participant 1 engaged in allowed him to find a job within two weeks of entering the program, he learned how to budget and save money, he started going to church and reading his Bible and overall, his attitude changed for the better. Participant 3 emphasized the benefits of the program that helped him become an asset to the community in the following ways: he goes to work every day, he attends his classes, he goes to church and he is learning how to live a clean lifestyle and save his mind. Programs like this are important for African American males because the path that this population takes out of prison is often different in terms of how they transition back into society (Gill & Wilson, 2017). Participants also spoke about helpful facets of the program such as the job interview and resume preparation help that they received while living in the reentry residential transitional home. The reentry residential transitional home's program was positive for all of the seven participants who utilized this option when transitioning back into society (Gill & Wilson, 2017).

Theme 6: Societal Reactions

The participants all described various societal reactions they experienced from members of society. One participant expressed presenting himself if as if he had never gone to prison before so because he did not want to be labeled as being an ex-offender.

Another participant verbalized that when he encountered people who had never done time before and they found out he had been to prison they would turn their back and state he's done time before and act totally different. A few of the participants also reported people not really being judgmental and, in some cases, they felt as though people cared more or were more curious about why they had been to prison and how much time they had served.

One participant articulated that he was not ashamed of having been in prison but he just didn't want to carry the label of a person who has been to prison or to hear people say verbally that he just got out of prison. A qualitative study conducted by Moran (2012) found that ex-offenders not only experience discrimination as a result of the unmarked consequences of incarceration, but because of conspicuous signs such as tattoos, missing teeth and manner of speech. The participants in the present study echoed this finding when they articulated that they walked, talked and acted a certain way to unmask them as former prisoners. The marked signs frequently result in societal discriminations (Moran, 2012).

The societal reactions described by the participants confirmed the findings presented in the literature review. Some members of society exhibit discriminatory behaviors toward ex-offenders as a result of their past criminal nature (Moran, 2012). Moreover, ex-offenders experience social bias and discrimination because of the perception of many persons in society that an inherent criminality attributed toward their incarceration (Pecker, 2013). The stigma of being incarcerated lingers long after an ex-

offender is released in order to reintegrate back into society and also accounts for the societal reactions found in this study (Clow & Leach, 2015).

Theme 7: Challenges/Barriers After Release

Finding employment is the first step to reentry success because it makes all other reentry responsibilities possible by providing the funds needed to purchase a car, rent an apartment and clothe and feed yourself and your children. Employment was the first topic discussed by most participants in this study, and was reiterated by many to stress its importance. Some participants noted that the process of finding a job can be complicated by the kind of charge they have on their criminal record because many employers are reluctant to hire people who have committed certain types of crimes (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016). The difficulty in securing a job was echoed by the participants and findings by Mbuba (2012), who found that the label of ex-offender resulted in a lifetime of stigma of being viewed as a criminal. Lockwood, Nally, and Ho (2016) showed that African American male ex-offenders have a higher recidivism rate because they are likely to return to urban neighborhoods characterized by poverty, unemployment and crime.

Lockwood et al. indicated that post-release work was the most influential factor of recidivism, regardless of the offender's ethnicity. Unemployment was the most influential factor in recurrence, irrespective of an offender's race and education. Their job prospects were limited by employer's preferences, low levels of education and training and fragmented personal networks or social capital. The six participants reported having post-prison financial difficulties because of exclusions from medium to high wage job categories. The prohibitions occurred regardless of education or the job skill level of

participants. As a consequence, the participants were only able to secure employment in mediocre paying jobs. The low wage rank of the participants mirrored the findings of the quantitative study conducted by Alvarez and Loureiro (2012). The statistical findings of their study confirmed their hypothesis that formerly incarcerated persons re-entering the labor market received lower wages than person with no criminal record performing the same tasks.

The difficulty to secure employment confirmed the studies found on life after imprisonment. Employers are extremely resistant to hire individuals formerly associated with the criminal justice system. This is because many employers view the history of people involved with the criminal justice system as disincentive to hiring (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; Batastini et al., 2014). Despite the challenges that come with finding employment after incarceration, five out of the six participants in the current study were able to find employment very soon after release, easing their transition into society.

African American male ex-offenders can gain not only an income from employment, but a sense of pride. Many participants in this study spoke about the speed at which they found employment while at the reentry residential transitional home with great pride, and some were proud of the job they found because it related to their skill set or education. The relief that came with finding a job alleviated the stress and uncertainty that comes with beginning the reentry process.

There is a strong interconnectedness between employment and education. Education offers learners a sense of self-confidence, and creates possibilities for the future. Education is power. However, the vast majority of incarcerated people lack a

formal education. Having an education can make it easier for African American males reentering society to find employment. Two of the participants in the current study had a GED. One of the participants graduated high school. There were two participants with a 10th and 11th grade education. Only one of the participants had a college degree which was an Associate's degree. The higher an education an African American male has when he is reentering society, the better off he will be in the search of employment, but if he did not obtain that education before going to prison, his chances of finding employment substantial enough to support himself, and possibly his children, are slim.

McDonald and Arlinghaus (2014) assert that many offenders earn their GED while incarcerated, giving them a better chance at becoming employed upon reentry. However, earning a GED, a trade certificate or college degree is not an option in all correctional facilities. Some participants noted that there were no programs in their facility for advancement of formal education while others noted that in the facilities where these programs were available, the cost for the programs may be too high for inmates to afford, making the programs inaccessible. There is a misconception in the general public that educational advancement is readily available to all inmates who are housed in correctional facilities, but this not the case. In 1994, Pell Grant eligibility ceased to apply to prisoners (Lagemann, 2015). As a result, there are now very few degree-obtaining programs available to people in prison, and for those that do exist, they are not free.

Housing and transportation are something that many people in the free world take for granted. For those leaving prison, having their own housing and transportation is a

privilege rather than a right. All the participants in this study mentioned that housing and transportation was one of their main concerns prior to their release from prison. Each of the participants were accepted into the reentry residential transitional home which alleviated the worry of housing during their duration in the program. Most ex-offenders living in reentry housing are expected to ride the bus to work and to necessary appointments. In some areas, public transportation is not an option, making ex-offenders dependent on friends and family members for transportation. Even in large cities, the public transportation system may not be able to get you to where you need to go. Participants in this study noted that a van was assigned to the reentry residential transitional home in order to get them to places that they needed to go. Of course, this van had to be shared by all participants or other participants without valid licenses would have to rely on others to get them to places they needed to go, but it greatly enhanced their ability to be successful during the reentry process.

Even for those who had to rely on other participants to get them from place to place it was perceived to be easier than if they had to use public transportation. However, James (2015) notes that this reliance on others is a threat to successful reentry to the community. Having to depend on others means that when others prove to be unreliable, it is the person who was depending on them that suffers. Although participants in this study did struggle with transportation issues, several of them found ways to get to the places they needed to go. One of the participants expressed his experiences with the reentry process as it related to housing and how it played a pivotal role in their ability to transition back into society (Dougherty, 2017). He described his difficulties in applying

for housing and when it was discovered that he had been in prison was told that he would have to wait five years to be eligible for housing. The participant noted that all of the housing situations that he would qualify for were in rough neighborhoods and how it was only because of the reentry residential transitional home that he was able to find suitable housing.

As the literature suggests, an ex-offender's first priority upon release is to find suitable housing, but 'suitable' is quite obviously defined differently depending on one's vantage point (Liem & Sampson, 2016). An ex-offender's first priority upon release is to find suitable housing, but 'suitable' is quite obviously defined differently depending on one's vantage point (Liem & Sampson, 2016). Suitable housing from an African American male ex-offender's point of view would probably have more personal and deep meaning. The term not only holds all of the promise that the word home might suggest for anyone needing shelter, but also creates a significant foundational link to other steps in the re-entry process. A place to live that is safe and dependable provides the stability necessary to adjust to living outside of confinement. It might even offer a refuge from the struggles of dealing with the other demands of reentry— reunification of family, physical and mental health treatment, and connecting to a community (Pelley & Hall, 2016).

Research has shown that transitioning back into the civilian world for many formerly incarcerated African American males means altering their pre-incarceration living conditions. Hernandez (2013) outlined research that focused on the issue of prisoner re-entry into society and found that housing is one of the many life problems that incarcerated persons face upon exiting prison. Housing, therefore, has been appropriately

characterized as the lynchpin that holds the reintegration process together (Lattimore & Visser, 2015). The existing literature proclaims that a necessary requirement for alleviating this problem is making the commitment to recognize that it exists and should not persist (Homsley, 2013). Certainly, a lack of housing by itself functions as a predictor of recidivism. In addition, many treatment professionals make a case that without established housing, relapse is almost certain (Soyer, 2016).

Theme 8: Family Relationship/Social Support

Several studies have shown the role that supportive interpersonal relationships play in one's successful reentry. Barrick et al. (2014) noted that supportive role that family members can play both during incarceration and after release. The researchers found that not only does familial support aid reintegration, but contact with family during incarceration also increases the likelihood of positive outcomes after release, such as lower recidivism. Participants in the current study stressed the benefits of supportive familial/social support relationships for various reasons. Emotional support from family/social support helped to alleviate stress and feelings of isolation during incarceration. Financial support made life more bearable by allowing participants to purchase commissary items. Fathers of children knowing that the mothers of their children were taking care of their children during incarceration gave participants the peace of mind that their children were being cared for, and an offer of a reentry residential transitional home as a place to stay after release made for a smooth transition to the community for some participants (Barrick et al., 2014).

Some of the participants in this study noted the distance between their correctional facility and their home, citing the reason for the lack of contact with family members during incarceration. Lack of familial visits during incarceration contributes to a feeling of isolation and loneliness for incarcerated people. The only other avenue for contact is through letters and phone calls, which all participants utilized during their incarceration. Any method of contact with supportive family members is beneficial (McCoy & Miller, 2013).

Simply having the perception that one has a positive support system on the outside is enough to create optimism in African American males about their chance for success upon release (Cobbina & Bender, 2012; McCoy & Miller, 2013). McCoy and Miller (2013) noted that having the perception that they have support on the outside was a strong predictor of desistance from crime. When African American males feel that they have nothing and no one to return to, they may feel defeated and give up. The level of social support African American males perceives that he has is inversely related to his level of fear of failure (Sanei & Mir-Khalili, 2015). Therefore, as his social support system decreases, his fear of failure increases, potentially making the tasks required for reentry appear less attainable. A participant from this study alluded to the point when he stated that some African American males he was incarcerated with had no drive to succeed because they had 'nothing to go home to.' Several of the participants stated that they had a good relationship with their family members. Only one of the participants was separated from his family members.

The impact incarceration has on an individual; sometimes it is hard to step back into society, the participants explained. Because in prison how you learn to survive on the inside is different. Now released we must learn new ways to survive on the outside. Participants explained that you have to learn how to do things differently (Bardach, 2012). Having the right people supporting you after incarceration is necessary. Several participants stated that they had the right support from the reentry residential transitional home. The reentry residential transitional home helped with the reentry process. Reentry programs elevate self-esteem and personal growth (James, 2015). The opportunity of having the right support and resources after incarceration is very significant to an individual. These reentry programs provide services which involve connecting with other resources and organizations supportive services that contribute to the reentry process.

Preparing for release back into the community starts on the first day of being incarcerated (James, 2015). However, reentry services will help with what you need to do better and be better. For African American male ex-offenders to be successfully reintegrating, they cannot do it alone. The reentry programs provide numerous assistances to help with transition. In the process of rebuilding yourself these reentry programs offer job readiness assistance, life skills, food services, clothing, housing, outpatient services and support groups which also has relapse preventions and personal development classes. Reentry programs facilitate all the right ingredients for successful reentry (James, 2015).

Theme 9: Religious Beliefs

Faith has been shown to be a beneficial coping mechanism for incarcerated individuals, and is associated with lowered rates of deviant behavior (Pargament, Exline, Jones & Shafranske, 2013). Several participants in the current study turned to faith to gain strength during their time in prison as well as during reentry. Belief in a higher power brought them comfort in difficult times. This coping mechanism was used by the six participants in the current study.

Along with finding peace in their belief system, participants experienced great joy in engaging in faith-based activities. These activities, such as attending church and participating in bible study groups, allowed for participation in a routine, which consisted of positive messages delivered by supportive individuals. In prison, African American males can be surrounded by people, but still feel isolated. Fortunately, faith and faith-based activities were a uniting factor for many participants in the current study, easing the mental stress often experienced by incarcerated individuals (Mandhouj, Aubin, Amirouche, Perroud & Huguelet, 2014). These findings support research that found turning to faith during incarceration can be an effective coping mechanism which allows one to find peace and gain respect from others (Mandhouj, Aubin, Amirouche, Perroud & Huguelet, 2014). The 2014 study by Mandhouj et al. also revealed that faith was beneficial when transitioning into the community, and it was associated with lowered recidivism and risk of suicide.

Theme 10: Strong Will/Determination to Succeed

The source of strength for African American male's motivators to reentry society successfully contribute to their determination to succeed. He will be drawn to tend to and nurture whatever he values most (Flake, Hulleman, McCoach & Welsh, 2015).

Rebuilding relationships with children after incarceration was one of the most important goals related to parenting for several participants. Participants reported that children may be angry with their fathers for leaving, they may be skeptical that their fathers changed in a positive way and some of the children may have lost contact with their fathers when they were incarcerated. Despite these challenges, fathers in this study reported that their children were one of their biggest motivators to be successful after release. This supports a recent study by Brodie et al. (2014) in which formerly incarcerated fathers described being separated from their children as 'the greatest punishment of all.'

Motivation to achieve a goal is determined by the values one holds, but the cost associated with trying to achieve a goal cannot be greater than the value of achieving the goal (Flake et al., 2015). Some participants in the current study spoke about valuing freedom, and all the things that come with that freedom. Valuing freedom and the benefits of that freedom more than people, places or activities that contributed to incarceration indicates that the cost associated with giving up old people and places was not so great as to override the value of freedom. Some participants spoke about valuing their relationships with their children, family members or God more than anything their former lifestyle had to offer. Unfortunately, addiction can override an individual's priorities, altering behavior in a way that is geared to satisfy the addiction rather than

achieve any goal. However, absent of any addiction, individuals are free to examine their motivators, and make goals based on those motivators (Flake et al., 2015).

The level of determination one has to achieve a goal is affected by how powerful the motivator is. For African American male's in the current study, their motivators were strong enough to effect change in their behavior. Participants frequently mentioned how 'determined' they were to be successful after prison so that they would never be separated from the people or things that were most important to them (Flake et al., 2015). Relationships were a motivating factor for reentry success for every participant. For those who had children, it was the children who motivated them most to live a crime-free life in the community. For some of the participants, family members were an important motivator. The remaining participants were motivated by their own desire to effect positive change in their lives and to be productive contributing citizens in society.

Conceptual Framework and Findings Interpretations

The results of this study validated the conceptual framework on which the study was built and executed as identified in a majority of the emerging themes. The central component of this study's conceptual framework was Becker's (1963) SRT in the social context of labeling, and Tajfel's (1982) SIT as it relates to stigma. SIT was formed around the theory that individuals who are deemed social deviants are labeled and considered outsiders (Becker, 1963). As stated in Chapter 2, both theories are identified with the experiences of ex-offenders in the peer-reviewed literature.

It became evident during this study that the post-prison experiences of the participants were highly influenced by the social deviant label attached to them as a result

of their incarceration. SIT explains how people are grouped together by members of society. As a result, individuals frequently identify with and accept the identities they are given. SIT offers a framework for some of the post-prison experiences of the participants as it relates to their views of self, how they are perceived by members of society and the stigma they experience.

SRT-Labeling

SRT addresses the concept that deviance is the creation of social groups in a society to generate social rules (Becker, 1963). Individuals who break the social rules are labeled deviants. Once the individuals are labeled, they become part of the broad views applied to the label. According to Becker (1963), it is hard to continue life's normal routine once the label is conferred.

All of the participants in the present study experienced difficulties in procuring adequate employment. Further, the participants reported being stuck in a low socioeconomic status. A majority of the participants talked about the hope that they had of rising above their lower economic status as a result of the label that has been conferred on them. Cherney and Fitzgerald (2016) corroborated these employment difficulties. Cherney and Fitzgerald (2016) analyzed interview data and found that the label of ex-offender presented severe employment challenges for formerly incarcerated African American males.

The low socioeconomic status of the participants in this study is consistent with Becker's (1963) SRT that dominant social groups in a society formulate social rules into laws that disenfranchise against those they deem to be deviants (Murphy et al., 2011).

According to Murphy et al., the internet-driven electronic background checks that are prevalent in today's society transmit limited criminal background information on individuals. An overall outcome of the criminal history of a person is usually not included on those background checks. However, these electronic criminal background messages are viewed by prospective employers as a flag that the job applicant has a character flaw or is a deviant. The label of deviant limits most formerly incarcerated African American males to low paying jobs and restricts them from being able to secure housing.

Labeling of African American male ex-offenders also results in social standing in communities. The social standing loss, and the fear of hostility exhibited against ex-offenders are social barriers to post-prison adjustment (Visher et al., 2013). In the present study, the participants articulated that society's rejection, and the fear of reentering prison, shaped their self-imposed social isolation. The participants in this study verbalized that, in their view, they are perceived as ex-offenders by members of society because of their incarceration.

SIT-Stigma

SIT is an identity process that involves people who discriminate against and stigmatize other individuals whom they consider members of the out-groups of society (Tajfel, 1982). According to Goffman (1963), stigma is the degraded social identity placed on individuals by other persons or groups in society. O'Brien and Findley (2014) reported that as a part of their cognitive processes, individuals identify themselves with

certain groups. Persons in the powerful social groups justify their decisions regarding incarceration and ex-offenders based on their desire to remain in these social groups.

As Goffman (1963) explained, social stigma is related to the disapproval of persons or groups in society who perceive that the flawed character, or the spoiled identity of some individuals, separates them from other members of society. This stigma is the result of preconceived ideas to formulate an individual's identity that results in the negative view of the individual. Stigma is demonstrated in the form of social rejection, dehumanization, dishonor and stereotyping (Kassin, 2015). Often, individuals in the social groups that are considered outsiders are unable to reconcile why they are members of these groups and just accept the diminished identities as a survival mechanism (Asencio & Burke, 2011).

The 6 participants described various stigmas they experienced after their release from prison. The participants believed that the fundamental reason for the negative social reactions they faced from both family members and persons in their communities is the stigma of ex-offender. The stigma of being perceived as an ex-offender is consistent with the findings of Ricciardelli and Clow (2012). Goffman's theory of stigma was the conceptual foundation of Ricciardelli and Clow's research.

Ricciardelli and Clow (2012) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of individuals in society toward erroneously convicted persons. Ricciardelli and Clow (2012) reported that the respondents' perceptions of the exonerees were that they were all guilty. Furthermore, all the respondents expressed negative feelings towards wrongfully

convicted individuals. A wrongful conviction leads to the assumption of unwanted or blemished characteristics that resulted in stigma and discrimination (Bos et al., 2013).

The stigma associated with incarceration also contributed to the unresolved psychological and emotional factors experienced by the participants. The psychological and emotional trauma of imprisonment, along with the loss of dignity after release experienced by most ex-offenders, creates reentry difficulties (Schnittker, 2014). Some of the unresolved psychological and emotional factors associated with incarceration was the acceptance of the perpetuated stigma by some African American male ex-offenders (Bos et al., 2013). Stigma acceptance is manifested in this study by the inability, or refusal, of a majority of the participants to abolish the identities and conceptions of self they had developed during their incarceration.

Many participants verbalized their inability to abolish the toughness they developed in prison. Several participants expressed that they had accepted the fact that they will be viewed as ex-offenders for the rest of their lives. These self-views and acceptance of negative identities are consistent with the findings of researchers who have studied how the identities placed on individuals by social groups in a society are accepted as the perception of self (Moore et al., 2013). Self-labeling and SIT are reasons why numerous individuals accept the negative identities subscribed to them by dominant groups in society. According to Asencio and Burke (2011), the labels bestowed upon individuals can become so internalized that the negative identities become the view of self.

The view of self and acceptance of the acquired identity are similar to the findings of Frank and Gill (2015). In their qualitative study, Frank and Gill reported that some former inmates expressed severe hardships in trying to return to their behaviors associated with the moral identities they had before their incarcerations. In fact, many inmates became severely stressed in switching back and forth between moral identity and the inmate identity. As a result, they resigned themselves to just staying with the inmate identity during their incarceration. However, after confinement, they suffered severe challenges in once again attempting to return to moral identity. The hard exterior and toughness associated with prison identity, regarded as outside the norm of society, were expressed by some of the participants in the present study as behaviors adopted during their incarceration that they could not, or would not, discard.

Limitations

Despite the rich data collected and correspondent analysis, this research, like any other research, has its limitations. Merriam (2015) emphasized the actual concern, depending on the phenomenon, is trouble finding participants for a study. The first limitation is the results of this study was not intended to generalize to all African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. This study was limited to only explain the cases of participants included in this study. Second, the sample size for the study was small sample size of six participants. Therefore, the small sample size prevented the transferability of the findings to all African American male ex-offenders in the United States other than those stipulated in the current inclusion criteria.

I conducted interviews until saturation was completed after the sixth interview when no new ideas were presented to mitigate this limitation.

Third, the findings were delimited to a southeastern region of a South Carolina with a specific program, one which may have a different effect when repeating this study in another part of the country. Therefore, generalizing the results of this study to all African American male ex-offenders in other regions of South Carolina must be done with caution. Fourth, a limitation of the study was my personal and professional relationship to the phenomenon which had the potential to lead to researcher bias. All knowledge, beliefs, experiences and values were put aside to describe accurately the post-prison lived experiences as presented by the participants. I also used a self-reflecting journal to take notes during data collection and analysis so I could monitor my own thoughts and feelings.

Fifth, despite the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviews, participants may not answer all the questions honestly feeling that they have something to risk which posed a limitation (Merriam, 2015). In this study, attempts were made to ensure an atmosphere of open, honest and non-dominant communication during the interviews. I ensured participants that all questions were open ended and I was careful not to inject any personal assumptions, or beliefs throughout the interview process. The interview protocol was utilized as a guidance to assist in the management of this process. Because of this, I assumed that the participants responded to all questions in a truthful manner.

Furthermore, I noted that interview responses are personal perceptions and not always reflective of the object world. I understood that there is the potential for another

salient limitation based on the participants' recollection of events or lived experiences during the reentry process. I recognized another limitation is lack of experience conducting a phenomenological study. Finally, all participants were from southeastern South Carolina and between the ages of 34-51; therefore, it could not be discerned whether or not groups under 34 shared similar lived experiences.

Recommendations

I conducted this study to address the identified gap in the literature regarding the post-prison lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations and were faced with reintegrating back into society after release from prison. The study consisted of a sample size of 6 persons who had a history of multiple incarcerations, were English speaking, who served more than 1 year in a southern state or federal prison, had committed felony offenses in the south-eastern region of the state, who were housed in a residential reentry center, and were not mentally unstable or cognitively impaired. The participants were all African American males residing in the southeastern region of South Carolina. The 6 participants provided valuable insights into their perceptions of their post-prison lived experiences, and how and why these experiences were developed, specifically as they pertain to the challenges and obstacles they faced as they transitioned from prison into the community.

This research was not available to all ex-offenders, and the interviews were conducted with African American males only. Therefore, the results of the study may underestimate the extent to which the post-prison lived experiences of the participants affect the reentry success or failure of the overall population of ex-offenders. Hence,

future research could be conducted to address the limitation of this study by examining the post-prison lived experiences of a more diverse sample of ex-offenders which would include other races and ethnic groups because this study was limited to African American males. A more varied sample of ex-offenders could reveal additional experiences that were not ascertained in this study.

It should also be noted that due to the nature of the data in this study, there was no control for variables. Consequently, a quantitative study could be conducted to determine how the post-prison experiences of ex-offenders are measured by the variables of stigma and labeling. Specifically, statistical data could help to increase the knowledge of how the identities developed in the prison environment affect the reintegration post-prison experiences years after the prison release. There was no data as to how African American male ex-offenders manage their prison identities after their release from prison. In general, any additional study within the realm of post-prison experiences of African American male ex-offenders would advance the knowledge to the social, psychological and legal needs of this population.

Recommendations for Future Research

If we are going to design and implement programs aimed at improving outcomes for African American males, we must conduct future research that explores their specific needs as well as their perception of the reintegration process after their release from prison (Olson et al., 2016). This approach will help to replace the norm approach that has historically been used to treat males with a diverse specific approach that is designed to meet the needs of African American males. Research that seeks to understand the

opinions and perceptions of African American males who are navigating the reentry process with a history of multiple incarcerations is largely absent in research literature. If we begin to listen to those who are willing to talk, we may better be able to serve this marginalized population.

Future researchers can conduct a pilot study with African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations who have participated in a reentry program. According to Leon et al. (2011), a pilot study can test the feasibility of the study, help validate the interview protocol and help mitigate the potential risks regarding credibility and validity of the research. Although this study only included six participants, conducting a pilot study would help future researchers select information-rich cases to ensure the study has depth and breadth.

As previously noted, there are no studies conducted that have focused on understanding the lived experiences of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations who are transitioning from prison back into society. Future researchers could replicate this study utilizing a phenomenological approach with ex-offenders in different races, ethnic groups or age groups that have experienced this same phenomenon. By collecting more data, analyzing more data and presenting data to human resource and public administrators in local government as well as criminal justice professionals could help facilitate change regarding organizational policy and practices, programs and community stakeholder strategies. Additional data could also contribute to evaluating the extent the criminal record, limited education and limited work skills may have on the impact as to whether an ex-offender succeeds or fails during their process of reentry.

All participants in this study lived in southeastern South Carolina, and their needs are much different from ex-offenders in other regions. These men have unique experiences that are contingent upon their social and economic conditions. Future researchers should discern whether or not the geographic location of ex-offenders and the challenges that confront them impact their ability to be successful or unsuccessful as they transition from prison to the society in a rural, metropolitan or urban area in the state of South Carolina (Bahr, 2015). There is a strong need for vocational skills, transportation, housing and ability to take care of financial obligations. Harding (2013) pointed out reentry challenges and lack of services increase the likelihood of recidivism. If we as a society have expectations that all ex-offenders should be successful after their release from prison, it is important that we understand the magnitude of how relevant their experiences, opinions and perceptions as they navigate this process and how the challenges and obstacles they face post-prison will have a determining factor in their ability to successfully or unsuccessfully reintegrate back into society.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The implications for positive social change resulting from this study are significant because findings contribute to the body of research aimed at this group of men and their perception of their lived experiences as they transition from prison back into the community. This study outlined both the positive and negative experiences African American male ex-offenders have during incarceration and during the reentry process, which influence their likelihood of success during reentry. Specific suggestions were

offered to help interested parties increase the effectiveness of programs and services for African American male ex-offenders in the following section.

Participants outlined the economical, emotional and social adjustments that affected their ability to reintegrate back into society. These challenges were considered paramount in whether or not African American male ex-offenders returned to criminal behavior. The outlining of these obstacles offers treatment professionals a foundation to help African American male ex-offenders build a new mindset, and make new choices, leading them toward a healthier path. Overall, the goal of incarceration is not only to separate offenders from the public, but also to rehabilitate them, sending them back into the community armed with new skills, a new mindset and goals for the future. If the findings from this study result in change for programs and policies used for treating African American male ex-offenders, the potential outcome would be lowered recidivism rates for African American males.

Individual Level

The implications for positive social change at the individual level includes African American male ex-offenders take the initiative to learn about the process of reentry so that they are familiar with each stage of the process. Each participant expressed they had a good support system of family and friends. It is important for African American male ex-offenders to have a good support system as they offer the stability; they need to be successful. African American male ex-offenders must be empowered and have self-determination. Family relationships were a significant factor that helped these participants from returning to prison. The personal experiences of these

men have shaped their worldview which plays a key role in their self-awareness and reentering society with the necessary belief for them to succeed.

Organizational Level

The implication for positive social change at the organizational level includes more organizations stepping up and helping African American male ex-offenders return to our communities safe and successful. Organizations need to be more involved in legislation related to reentry, and understanding the reentry process for African American male ex-offenders. More collaborative efforts with law enforcement, correctional institutions and governmental agencies interested in improving reentry reform which includes societal and policy levels of positive social change. Evidence-based approaches to reentry policies have proven to be the best practices in reentry protocols. Reentry programs play a significant role in reducing recidivism rates for ex-offenders. Communities networking and sharing resources strengthen the commitment to improving reentry. Most importantly, upon release African American male ex-offenders need to enter a program tailored to their risk assessment needs to facilitate the appropriate support services to transition and reintegrate back into society.

Policy Level

The implications for positive social change at the policy level include changing outdated policies and practices that pose a challenge to African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations reintegrating successfully back into society. If the goal of public policy in recent years had been to incarcerate record numbers of African American men, then the strategies have been successful (The Sentencing Project, 2016).

With the passage of the mandatory minimum sentence, three strikes, truth-in-sentencing, life without the possibility of parole laws and the violent crime control and law enforcement act of 1994, the literature has shown that these laws include harsh punishments for offenses for which African Americans and Hispanic people often are disproportionately arrested and convicted (Quizlet, 2017). Literature has shown and continues to show that African American males are more likely than whites to be confined awaiting trial to receive incarceration rather than community sentences, and to receive longer sentences (Quizlet, 2017).

Criminal justice policymakers should adopt and support more evidence-based and promising practices while being flexible about innovative methods which have a sound basis in empirical research. Support for research, including implementation, as well as cost-benefit analysis studies, is crucial if the system is to make the best of its limited resources and advance the body of knowledge that leads to policy changes (National Criminal Justice Association, 2017). Such experience is of limited use unless policymakers, practitioners and the public are kept informed. Criminal justice practitioners and community-based service providers must engage the African American communities on how to best prevent violence (National Criminal Justice Association, 2017).

Evidence-based policies provide a promising approach to challenges of the African American male incarcerated population and provide targeted and proven sanctions for offenders based on their risk to the community (National Criminal Justice Association, 2017). Criminal justice professionals must work with policymakers, law

enforcement, mental health providers, community groups and both public and private sector professionals to educate and develop solutions to this vital safety issue. Reentry programs can play a significant role in reducing the risk of reoffending. The goal of reentry programs is to reduce recidivism, improve public safety and reduce incarceration rates. Reentry services should begin when the offenders are incarcerated and should incorporate a risk assessment tool to guide placement into evidence-based reentry programs (National Criminal Justice Association, 2017).

Community monitoring should include services that address the needs identified while the offender is imprisoned and should focus on supervising high-risk offenders to reinforce accountability (National Criminal Justice Association, 2017). Upon release, offenders should reenter a reentry program created through the partnerships of the criminal justice agencies and local re-entry organizations to facilitate access to housing, jobs and mental health/substance abuse treatment in the communities where the offender lives. Law makers should support these efforts through adequate funding and legislation that seeks to correct such disparities that exist among African American men in the prison system (National Criminal Justice Association, 2017).

Methodologies

As stated in Chapter 2, the studies on the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations and are transitioning back from prison into the community are limited. Understanding the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders are garnered from the experiences of the individuals experiencing this phenomenon. The methodological implication of this study is that of

Moustakas (1994) 7-step data analysis procedure utilized allowed for a more targeted analysis procedure that led to refined in-depth descriptions of the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations and were reintegrating from prison back into society. The data collection and analysis methods employed also provided more comprehensive descriptions of the experiences of this population, exclusively from their perspectives.

Theoretical

Becker (1963) and Tajfel (1982) discussed the importance of social science researchers to continue advancing the theoretical understanding of the social concept of labeling and stigma as it relates to the ex-offender. Data on stigma and labeling combined with theoretical frameworks can help develop a more profound comprehension of the criminal justice system. A major implication of this study is that SIT and SRT can be employed to advance the theoretical understanding of the social and psychological needs of African American male ex-offenders as it relates to their post-prison lived experiences. Specifically, these theories can be used as theoretical foundations in quantitative studies in building a connection between data on the variables for African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations, and the social and psychological needs of this population as they reintegrate from prison back into society. Studies such as this can connect criminal justice scholars with psychology.

Recommendations for Practice

Most all participants complained about the preparation for going home before their release. It would be helpful if pre-release debriefing and preparation were

mandatory for all inmates. Pre-release preparation would help eliminate some of the shock African American male ex-offenders experience when they are released. Pre-screening before release would identify any issues that need attention post-release. Inmates should be given lists of resources on where they can get treatment. The list of resources should provide contact information from the geographical area individuals are returning to. Mental health providers both in and outside of the prison system should participate in mandatory training on the potential psychological effects of incarceration, how to recognize the systems and how to implement treatment for each identified symptom.

Job searching preparation would be also helpful if provided prior to release. Individuals who have been incarcerated long term are often not aware that the process for applying for jobs has changed. Pre-release preparation should include information on the changes in applying for jobs and suggestions for places where individuals can inquire that may provide computer instruction and use. Participants in this study provided valuable insight into how difficult it is to access essential services such as housing, employment, education and mental/substance abuse treatment. These insights can provide policy makers and those in the criminal justice field with knowledge as to how the stigma and label of a criminal record and race influences the reentry process of African American ex-offenders. The United States must acknowledge that there are racial differences in how the criminal justice system operates. Treatment rather than incarceration and reforming the current sentencing policies can reduce mass incarceration. Having in place a decision-making model to determine who is released, based on observable, measurable factors

with checks and balances in place, will lead to better decisions than those found on the offense for which a person is incarcerated.

As stated, the participants in this study provided valuable insight into how economical, emotional and social adjustments after their release from prison have affected their transition from prison into their communities. These insights will provide family members, legislators and other practitioners in the criminal justice system with knowledge as to how stigma and label harmfully influence the reentry experiences of African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations. Accordingly, implications of this study for positive social change include awareness of the economical, emotional and social post-prison challenges of African American males exclusively from their perspectives. Finally, the descriptions provided by the participants can provide direction for future research to enhance the post-prison lived experiences of African American males who have a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegrating back into society.

Conclusion

The goal of this phenomenological study was to explore the post-prison lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders who have had a history of multiple incarcerations and are faced with reintegration back into society after being released from prison. This research gave attention to the voices of six participants and contributed to understanding the challenges African American male ex-offenders face reintegrating back into society. The objective of the study was to investigate a gap in the literature of an understanding of the unexplored meanings and essence of the post-prison lived

experiences of African American male ex-offenders exclusively from their perspectives. A majority of the findings of the study were consistent with previous empirical information from the literature review on the post-incarceration experiences of African American male ex-offenders with reentry programs, reentry services and the reentry process. The participants imparted valuable descriptions into the post-release difficulties they experienced in attempting to reintegrate back into society.

The findings from this study supported the conceptual framework based on Becker's (1963) SRT from the social concept of labeling and Tajfel's (1982) SIT from the social concept of stigma. The stigma associated with the deviant label of ex-convict bestowed on formerly incarcerated persons after their release is a key element that provides understanding of how and why participants experienced the described post-prison difficulties (DePierre et al., 2013). Another significant factor in understanding the experiences of African American male ex-offenders is the acceptance of the deviant label. The participants understood the importance of abolishing the prison identity and to abandon the characteristics and behaviors they had developed during their incarceration. This study advances the current literature on the reentry process by merging phenomenology and Becker's (1963) SRT and Tajfel's (1982) SIT theories by addressing the challenges that African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations face as they reintegrate back into society and offers confirmation from a qualitative perspective. I used Becker's (1963) SRT and Tajfel's (1982) SIT as a framework to develop open-ended interview questions to elucidate what various experiences as well as support systems shaped the participants in this study. Once these areas were identified,

the theoretical framework was used to anticipate what would be the individual's most successful approach to transitioning back into society.

To obtain results, the data collected in this study was based on interviews of the participants. Results showed that addressing the economical, emotional and social needs of African American male ex-offenders during the reintegration process produced better outcomes of which this population could achieve their goals of successfully merging back into society, staying stable and using the life skills learned from reentry programs. Overall, these participants said obtaining gainful employment, staying out of prison, securing housing and coming back as a mentor to help others, to show they can be successfully integrated back into their communities is the key to a successful pathway of the reentry process. Using Becker's (1963) SRT and Tajfel's (1982) SIT, I was able to gain knowledge in my study to inform policy and programmatic decision-making. Both policy and program makers need to be aware of the interconnection between the economical, emotional and social needs of African American male ex-offenders as they transition from prison back into society and their need for resources and positive relationships with social support systems in order to ensure their success.

Change begins with listening and understanding each other. The individuals in my study gave voice and provided valuable insight into the importance of a robust and comprehensive support system on all levels for African American male ex-offenders with a history of multiple incarcerations who have to undergo the process of reintegration back into society. A better understanding of the reentry process as it pertains to this special population would enable professionals, community leaders, stakeholders and family

members to help more ex-offenders adjust to life outside of prison. Support in terms of a variety of resources being available to them along with human interaction and advocacy on their behalf. Providing these insights to policymakers and those in the business of criminal justice reform can impart knowledge as to how the lack of resources and support negatively affects the offender's ability to sustain success and stability upon reentry.

The purpose of this study was effectively accomplished by providing six participants a voice to describe their post-prison lived experiences. It is hoped that the knowledge presented by the participants will add to the literature regarding the reentry process and the importance of the states to develop comprehensive legislation and reentry programs to assist African American male ex-offenders in the transition from prison into society. Recommendations for future research are suggesting looking at a quantitative analysis of African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations as they transition from prison back into the community. Implications for this study include addressing recommended future procedural changes for reentry services and should begin when the offenders are incarcerated and should incorporate a risk assessment tool to guide placement into evidence-based reentry programs. These study findings highlighted the critical role of the economical, emotional and social adjustments needs of African American male ex-offenders and how they play a part in their transitioning process and reintegration into society successfully to create positive social change.

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Appendix A: Request for Permission to partner with Organization & Assistance to
Disseminate Recruitment Flyer

Greetings!

My name is Chanae Lumpkin and I am a doctoral student in Walden University's PhD program. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation entitled "Perceptions of the Reentry Process among African American Male Ex-Offenders with Multiple Incarcerations," and your assistance is requested. The research study is part of my doctoral dissertation research at Walden University under the direction of Dr. Tina Jaeckle who is my chairperson and can be reached by e-mail at xxxxwaldenu.edu or by mobile device at xxx-xxx-xxxx. In order to complete this study, I will need to interview 7-10 African American male ex-offenders who meet certain criteria and I am seeking your assistance to disseminate recruitment flyers to your program participants who may meet this outlined criterion.

This study is being conducted to learn more about the emotional, economical and social needs of African American male ex-offenders after their release from prison, and how post-release challenges (i.e., the stigma/shame) they are faced with affects their lives as they reintegrate back into society. I am particularly interested in speaking with African American male ex-offenders who have had a history of multiple incarcerations. I would like to know more about this topic because African American males are disproportionately represented in the U.S. prison system in that of the 1,612,395 incarcerated 561,400 of those are African American males. Of the 700,000 individuals

released from state, local & federal facilities each year, African American males return to the criminal justice system within 3 years with almost 7 out of 10 returning back to prison. African American males are released back into the community and often find it difficult to secure housing & employment, establish new skills, access substance abuse & health treatment, attempt to change negative patterns of behavior, adjust to unfamiliar technology, or experience dismissal from family/friends.

It is my hope that through this research, the light will be shed on a myriad of issues faced by African American male ex-offenders reintegrating back into society who have a history of multiple incarcerations in an effort to help influence social change by broadening the knowledge of the field of social services to better understand and accommodate the needs of African American males as they seek to cope with prisoner reentry and the challenges of post-prison adjustment. There is no cost for program participants to participate in this study. All participants will receive \$20.00 monetary compensation as a sign of gratitude for their participation in the study. Participation in research is always voluntary. The participants are free to choose whether or not to participate and can discontinue participation at any time. Information provided by the participant will be kept confidential.

I am requesting permission to disseminate the attached flyer to your program participants. I would like the opportunity to speak with African American male ex-offenders who are currently enrolled in your program that want to take part in this research study and who are: African American or Black male, have a history of multiple incarcerations, are English speaking, have committed felony offenses in the southeastern part of the state,

served 1 year or more in a southern state/federal prison & are able to participate in a 45-60 minute interview.

Thank you for taking the time to review this proposal. If you are willing to allow me to conduct this research, please post the enclosed recruitment flyer in a common area for all program participants, on your intranet page, or your social media account if one is available. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the details of the research with you much further, and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me using one of the preferred methods enclosed below.

Thank you in advance for your assistance to help me recruit potential participants for my study and I look forward to working with you and the program participants that you so graciously serve.

Respectfully,

Chanae Lumpkin, Ph.D. Student

Walden University

Doctoral Candidate

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation from the Research Partner

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

January 29, 2019

Dear Chanae Lumpkin,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled “Perceptions of the Reentry Process among African American Male Ex-Offenders with a History of Multiple Incarcerations” within the XXXXXXXX. As part of this study, I authorize you to disseminate a recruitment flyer that allows you to recruit 7-10 African American male ex-offenders who have a history of multiple incarcerations, are English speaking, have committed felony offenses in the southeastern part of the state, served 1 year or more in a southern state/federal prison & are able to participate in a 45-60 minute interview; conduct semistructured face-to-face interviews to collect data from the potential participants; utilize a journal to collect data during the process of interviewing the potential participants; utilize an audio recorder to document the interview for purposes of data collection; provide a summary of the notes to each

participant from the interview to ensure accuracy of what was disclosed in the interview prior to reporting it in my dissertation; and lastly a brief summary (i.e., one to two pages) about the results of the study will be shared with the participants and your organization. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: disseminating a recruitment flyer for potential participants, providing supervision in an initial meeting with potential participants to re-introduce the research study and providing a vacant classroom/meeting room to allow privacy to interview men for the dissertation study. We reserved the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official (Please insert signature here)

Contact Information (Please insert contact information here)

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix C: Invitation Flyer Seeking Volunteers for a Research Study Entitled

Perceptions of the Reentry Process among Formerly Incarcerated African American

Males with Multiple Incarcerations



*Formerly Incarcerated
Individuals face many obstacles
to a successful reentry or
transition from jail or prison life
back into the community*

Did you know?

- African American males are disproportionately represented in the U.S. prison system in that of the 1,612,395 incarcerated 561,400 of those are African American males?
- Of the 700,000 individuals released from state, local & federal facilities each year, African American males return to the criminal justice system within 3 years with almost 7 out of 10 returning back to prison?
- African American males are released back into the community and often find it difficult to secure housing & employment, establish new skills, access substance abuse & health treatment, attempt to change negative patterns of behavior, adjust to unfamiliar technology, or experience dismissal from family/friends?

What does this mean to you?

My name is Ms. Lumpkin and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. To complete my degree, I am conducting a study to **explore and describe** the **lived experiences** of 7-10 formerly incarcerated African American males who have a **history of multiple incarcerations**, are **English speaking**, have **committed felony offenses** in the southeastern part of the state, **served 1 year or more in a southern state/federal prison &** are able to participate in a **45-60 minute interview**. The purpose is to learn more about the **barriers** and **challenges** that confront formerly incarcerated African American males due to the

stigma of having a **history of multiple incarcerations**. In other words, this study will allow you the **opportunity to tell your post-released stories**.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND USED

ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FORMERLY

INCARCERATED AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES WITH A

HISTORY OF MULTIPLE INCARCERATIONS AFTER THEIR RELEASE FROM PRISON.

Your participation is voluntary and you can terminate (stop) your participation at any time during the interview process. **Your participation in this study will be conducted through face-to-face interviews.** There is monetary compensation (\$75) for participating in this study. Your participation in the study will help to advance our understanding of the post-prison experiences of formerly incarcerated African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations as they transition from prison back into the community.

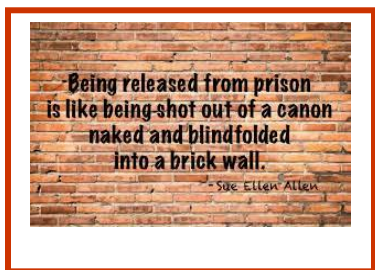
Do you want to?

Have your voice heard? Share your lived experience? Positively contribute to changes in policy & practices as it relates to formerly incarcerated African American males? Help to understand this phenomenon?

To schedule your interview for this important study

Contact me at XXXXXXXXXX

Thank you for your efforts in this study!



Appendix D: Appointment Schedule Form

Saturday, July 13, 2019

1. L. C. (2:00pm)
2. G. B. (3:30pm)
3. H. G. (5:00pm)

Saturday, July 27, 2019

1. K. B. (2:00pm)

Sunday, July 28, 2019

1. F.T. (9:00am)

Saturday, August 10, 2019

1. S. J. (2:00pm)

Appendix E: Interview Protocol for Participants

Interview questions with script and prompts. Floating prompts or prompts after questions, indicated in italics, may be used to ask for more explanation or information.

Floating Prompts: These prompts may be used at any time when the researcher wants to further understand the process as well as explore the larger context in which this process occurs:

Prompts:

- *Would you tell me a bit more about this?*
- *Would you expand on this?*
- *What happened?*
- *What led up to this?*
- *What else was happening at the time?*
- *How did this play out?*
- *How did this impact your situation?*
- *What changed for you?*
- *What changed about your situation?*

The Interview

Introduction: Good afternoon/evening, *participant's name*. My name is Chanae Lumpkin. I am a PhD candidate at Walden University. You may call me Ms. Lumpkin. How would you like for me to address you? *Repeat name*. Thank you for being willing to participate in this project. I want you to feel comfortable answering these questions. I want you to know that your experience matters to me.

More importantly, you will be contributing to knowledge about your lived experiences as a formerly incarcerated African American male with a history of multiple incarcerations and the challenges you are faced with while reintegrating back into the society. Any information that you provide will be confidential and anonymous. Research collected about you will not be used in any way that could lead to your identification. I will not ask any questions that could incriminate you in any legal settings and all questions will focus on any past criminal activities. However, if information is revealed about child abuse or neglect, or potentially dangerous future behavior to yourself or others, or any future potential criminal activity, then I am required to report this information to proper authorities. The purpose of this interview is to better understand and provide an outlet for you as a participant to voice your lived experiences, views and share your accounts of the reentry process and the challenges that are faced by formerly incarcerated African American males with a history of multiple incarcerations. The information collected in this interview will only be used to better understand this process.

Format: This questionnaire is designed to document your experience. Questions in this

interview will guide you in the telling of your experience. You will be able to say you do not know or ask me to restate the question. You can also choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable answering.

Length: Depending on your life experience, it will take anywhere from 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete this interview process. You are free to take a break if you need to.

I am now turning on the recorder. If you would like to answer a question but not have it recorded, please ask me to turn the recorder off at any time, and I will do so.

Foundation Questions:

What are the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated African American males who have a history of multiple incarcerations of the reentry process the transition from prison back into the community?

What was the influence of African American male's history of multiple incarcerations on their economical, emotional and social adjustments after their release from prison and the ability to reintegrate back into society?

Warm-up questions:

The criminal justice system and the people who study criminal justice refer to leaving prison and

returning to a community as reentry or reintegration which are both used to describe this process.

A. At what point in your incarceration did you begin to think about your release from prison?

B. What were your primary concerns about returning to society after serving time in prison?

The purpose of this interview is to try to understand your experience. This is like telling your story, and it will be unique to you. It will be made up of your life experiences. The interview questions that I have prepared are there to help you tell your story; however, I understand that they may get in the way of you telling your story. I encourage you to go in the direction that your story takes you. There are no wrong ways to approach this interview. Remember that your responses are confidential. This is your story, and I want to make sure your story is what I end up with. You will have an opportunity at the end of the interview to address other issues or concerns you have that we have not discussed. I just wanted to assure you that you don't have to answer anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, or if you would like, you can request that I do not record something. I would like to focus, now, on your experiences with transitioning from prison back into society. Do you have any questions before we start? (If yes, answer the question(s). If no, begin). Okay, can we begin?

Please feel free to expand, ask me to repeat questions or make the question easier to understand. If answering any question makes you uncomfortable, you can decline to answer or request that I turn off the recorder.

Part I. I'm going to start by asking a few questions about your background/demographic history.

1. Can you please tell me your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your ethnicity or race?
4. What is the highest-grade level you completed?
5. What is your marital status?
6. Do you have children?
7. What is your employment history? Are you currently employed? If yes: What is your yearly income?
8. What type of felony offense(s) have you committed that led to your incarceration?
9. When were you released from prison?
10. How long were you incarcerated?
11. How many times have you been incarcerated?
12. Have you lived in your community most of your life? If no: Where did you grow up?

13. How long did you live in this area?
14. What is your family history in the area?
15. What was it like growing up there?
16. What is the most important thing I should know about you?
17. Who is the most important person in your life?

Part II. Now I'm going to ask you about your involvement in past illegal activity.

Involvement in past illegal activity:

1. What do you regard as the major turning points in your life that led to involvement in the criminal activity that led to your incarceration?

Prompts:

- a. What [illegal] were you doing?*
- b. How old were you when you committed this crime?*
- c. Thinking about your life experience, what do you think led to your involvement in crime (i.e. peers, neighborhood, family problems, economic problems, spouse/partner, abuse, under the influence)?*
- d. Have you ever used or sold drugs? If yes, can you explain why you started using and/or selling drugs?*

e. Where were you spending most of your time? Did you commit this crime alone or in a group?

f. Who were you spending most of your time with?

g. What else was going on in your life during this time?

2. Did your involvement in illegal activity change over time? IF YES: How?

Part III. Now I'm going to ask you about your experiences with the criminal justice system.

Intersection with the criminal justice system

1. What crime were you convicted of that led to your most recent incarceration in prison?

Prompts:

a. What were you doing that was illegal?

b. When did this happen?

c. Why do you think that you got in trouble?

d. Where were you spending most of your time?

e. Who were you spending most of your time with?

f. What else was going on in your life during this time?

2. Has your relationship with the criminal justice system in your community changed over

time? IF YES: How? Why do you think it has changed?

3. Multiple Incarcerations: Was there anything different about this last time that you went to prison?

a. IF YES: What was different?

Part IV. Now I'm going to ask you about the experiences you had in prison.

Incarceration:

1. What is a typical day like in prison?

Prompts:

- a. Are there any things about being in prison that you like? If so, what?
- b. Are there any things that you dislike? If so, what?

2. What was your relationship like with the outside world while you were in prison?

Prompts:

a. Relatives

b. Friends

c. Community-based organizations

3. Have you received visits from family/friends while you've been incarcerated? If so, who visited you? How often did s/he/they visit?

4. Has doing time in prison affected your ability to parent your children? If yes, how?

5. What were some of your primary concerns in the 6 months leading up to your release?
6. What did you do to prepare for your release while you were in prison?
7. Did you participate in any correctional and/or prerelease programs prior to your last release?

Prompts:

- a. *If so, what are all the programs and/or types of prerelease programs you participated in?*
 - b. *What did you actually do?*
 - c. *How many weeks or months were you in the program?*
 - d. *What did you find helpful about the program?*
 - e. *What did you find unhelpful about the program?*
 - f. *Do you think the program can be improved to make it more helpful? If so, in what ways?*
8. What did you think was going to happen when you left prison and what were your thoughts about leaving?
 9. Has doing time in prison changed your life? If so, how?

Prompts:

- a. *Have you gained anything from having done time? If so, what? How do you think prison helped you gain those things?*

- b. Have you lost from having done time? If so, what? How do you think prison helped you lose those things?*

Part V. Now I'm going to ask you about your reentry experiences during your first month.

Reentry – Leaving prison the first month:

1. If you think about your experience leaving prison and returning to your community, how would you describe this experience?
2. What happened the day you left prison? What stands out in your mind about that first day out and what were you thinking about? What was your mood?
3. Did you celebrate your release? If so, how?

Prompts:

- a. Who picked you up?*
- b. Where did you go?*
- c. Where did you live initially?*
- d. Who did you stay with?*
- e. What did you do?*
- f. Who did you see?*

4. Can you describe the experience/s you had your first month out?

Prompts:

- a. *Where did you go?*
- b. *Where did you live?*
- c. *What did you do?*
- d. *Who did you see?*
- e. *How were you managing your situation?*

5. Thinking back to that first month, what were you thinking about and how were you feeling?

6. What sort of things did you need during your first month out and how did you get or not get what you needed?

Prompts:

- a. *What was that like?*
- b. *How long did it take?*
- c. *Where did you find what you needed?*
- d. *How did you find what you needed?*
- e. *Did anyone help you?*

7. How do your current friends compare or differ from your recent friends?

Prompts:

- a. *Do you associate with the friends you had prior to your incarceration?*
- b. *Have any of your old friends been in trouble with the law?*
- c. *Do they currently get in trouble with the law?*
- d. *If yes, what kind of trouble have they been in?*

- e. If you have new friends, how did you meet your new friends?*
- f. Have any of your old friends been in trouble with the law?*
- g. Do they currently get in trouble with the law?*
- h. If yes, what kind of trouble have they been in?*

Part VI. Now I'm going to ask what it was like when you returned to your community.

Reentry to the community

1. How did things change for you the longer you were out?
2. What did you need and how did you get or not get what you needed?

Prompts:

- a. How long did it take to get what you needed?*
 - b. Where did you find what you needed?*
 - c. How did you find what you needed?*
 - d. Did anyone help you?*
3. What actions did you take to help facilitate a successful transition from prison to the community?
 4. Can you describe the community that you returned to in terms of what was the same and what was different?

Prompts:

- a. Did you feel the same or different about your community when you came back? Why did you feel this way?*
- b. How do you think your community felt about you coming back?*

- c. *Do you think that there were different individuals in the community that had negative feelings about your return?*
- d. *What are these different parts of the community? Can you explain these differences?*
5. How would you characterize or describe the responses of your relatives to your return to the community?
6. How would you characterize or describe the response of your friends to your return to the community?
7. How would you characterize or describe the response of the community to your return home?

Prompts for 5, 6, and 7:

- a. *What did they do when you got back?*
- b. *Were they the same as when you left? How were they the same?*
- c. *Were they different when you came back? How were they different?*
- d. *Did you feel different about family, friendships and/or acquaintances, and your community when you came back?*

IF YES: In what ways? Why do you think you felt differently?

8. What about family? Can you tell me a bit more about your family when you returned from prison to the community?

Prompts:

- a. *What did they do when you got back?*
- b. *Were they the same as when you left? How were they the same?*

c. *Did you feel the same about your family when you came back? Why did you feel this way?*

d. *Was your family different when you came back? How was it different?*

e. *Did you feel different about your family when you returned? In what ways? Why do you think you felt differently?*

Part VII. Now I'm going to ask your experiences after you left prison

Experiences of transitioning out of prison back into society

1. What do you regard as the major challenges and barriers you had to deal with when you returned home from prison?

Prompts:

a. *Can you give a specific example or story that illustrates that?*

b. *How did you deal with these challenges?*

2. Can you walk me through your experiences on the day you were released? How did you handle the following new issues you were facing?

Transportation

Prescription Drugs

Gate Money

Health Referrals (for what

health issues)

Public Assistance Needs

Housing Arrangements

Substance use treatment referrals

Mental Health Referrals

Employment referrals

Photo Identification

3. I can't imagine what does through one's mind about the society or community they are going back to. Can you share some of what you were thinking about?

Prompts: Hope, worries, expectations, doubts

4. What services did you receive after leaving prison? Please explain.

Prompts: *Who provided those services? How useful were these services to meeting your needs?*

5. How did you first get set up with the following? What were the obstacles you encountered?

Prompts:

- a. *Housing? Food? Employment? Education? Substance abuse treatment? Child care? Peer support? Counseling? Mental Health Service? Health care referral?*
 - b. *Were you able to support yourself when you first got out of prison?*
 - c. *If Yes, how did you support yourself?*
 - d. *If No, why weren't you able to support yourself?*
 - e. *How were you being supported? Family/Friends? Program?*
 - f. *Who informed you about this program?*
 - g. *What types of needs did you have?*
 - h. *How did you deal with them?*
6. Since leaving prison, how has the change or shift in technology affected your ability to transition back into society?

Let's talk about your employment situation.

7. *Is employment an important concern for you? Please explain more in detail.*

Prompts:

a. *Are you currently employed?*

b. *If yes:*

b. *How long have you been with your currently employer?*

a. *What type of employment?*

b. *How did you locate this job?*

c. *How soon after your release did you locate your first job?*

d. *What are some of the challenges you faced finding employment?*

If no:

e. *Why are you unemployed?*

f. *What has been your experience trying to find a job?*

g. *What are some of the steps you have taken to find a job?*

h. *In what ways if any, do your physical health issues, mental health issues and drug use help or hinder your ability to locate and maintain employment?*

i. *Did your participation or non-participation in pre-release programs help or hinder your ability to locate and retain employment?*

j. *What are some services you think would make it easier for someone in your position to be more successful locating and keeping a job?*

Let's talk about your housing situation.

8. Tell me about your housing situation immediately after your release?

Prompts:

__Family __Spouse _____Term

__Friends __Intimate Partner

__Homeless __Self

__Other

a. What type of housing was it?

__Private house/ owned

__Private house/Rental

__Government subsidize property

__Section 8 housing

__Half-way house/ Community Correctional Facility

__Supportive Housing (coordinated case management)

b. What was it like?

c. Can you tell me about any pre-release planning for housing you participated in while incarcerated and what were the benefits or disadvantages of doing so?

d. How many residences have you lived at, and for how long since your release?

e. What are some of the challenges you faced in acquiring housing?

I would like to hear about any physical health issues you may have.

9. Can you talk about that and when you were first diagnosed?

Prompts:

- a. How did having a physical health issue affect your life while you were incarcerated and now?*
- b. Tell me about any medical treatment if any did you received while in prison?*
- c. Did you participate in any pre-release planning for physical health maintenance while incarcerated? Can you tell me about that and what was it like for you?*
- d. Can you talk about what you are you currently doing to maintain your physical health?*

Prompt: Under the care of a physician, for what health issue(s), medications?

- e. If no, why are you not under the care of a physician?*
- f. In general how would you rate your health and why did you give yourself that rating?*

__Excellent

__Good

__Fair

__Poor

- g. Can you share your experience with getting or attempting to get medical coverage?*
- h. As you think about your reentry, how would you say your physical health issues have affected your being able to resettle?*
- i. What in your opinion are some services or things that you think would make it easier for someone in your position to be more successful in maintaining their physical health?*

I want us to talk about your mental health next.

10. Can you talk about any mental health or emotional problems you have struggled with?

Prompt: What has it been like for you?

Prompt: Have you ever received a mental health diagnosis?

a. When were you first diagnosed?

b. What was it like being incarcerated and having a mental illness?

c. What type of treatment if any did you receive while in prison? Tell me about that.

d. Did you participate in any pre-release planning for mental health maintenance while incarcerated?

e. How helpful or not was this in your continuing treatment once you were released?

f. Since your release, did you, and are you currently receiving any treatment?

g. If no, why are you not receiving treatment?

If yes, what treatment are you receiving and how frequently do you visit your mental health provider?

Prompt: What is that like for you?

h. As you think about your reentry into life outside prison, how would you say your mental health issues have affected your being able to resettle?

i. What in your opinion are some services or things that you think would make it easier for someone in your position to be more successful achieving and maintaining their mental health treatment?

- *How would you define your mental health issues?*

- *Did it influence your initial involvement in illegal activity? How?*
- *Did it influence the first time you got in trouble with the law? How?*
- *Was it a factor the first time you went to prison? How?*
- *Did it influence this last time you were incarcerated? How?*
- *How has it influenced your reentry?*
- *Have you ever wanted treatment for your mental health issues? Why? Did you get it?*
- *Where did you get it? What was your experience with treatment?*

I am now going to move to substance use.

11. Can you tell me about any past or present drug use?

a. What is/are your substance(s) of choice?

b. Tell me about how you got started?

Prompt: What age were you when you first started using drugs?

c. How would you describe your currently drug use?

d. Tell me about your treatment experiences both in and out of prison?

e. Can you talk about any pre-release planning for substance abuse treatment maintenance you participated in while you were incarcerated?

f. Can you say how helpful or not was this in you continuing treatment since your release?

g. How important is sobriety to you?

h. As you think about your reentry into life outside prison, how would you say your substance abuse issues have affected your being able to resettle?

i. What in your opinion are some services or things that you think would make it easier for someone in your position to be more successful achieving and maintaining sobriety?

How would you define your substance use?

- ***Did it influence your initial involvement in illegal activity? How?***
- ***Did it influence the first time you got in trouble with the law? How?***
- ***Was it a factor the first time you went to prison? How?***
- ***Did it influence this last time you were incarcerated? How?***
- ***How has it influenced your reentry?***
- ***Have you ever wanted treatment for your substance use? Why? How did you get it? Where did you get it? What was your experience with treatment?***

12. How were you treated when people learned that you served time in prison? Can you give a specific example or story that illustrates the treatment you received?

13. Did you tell people that didn't know that you were in prison that you served time in prison? Why or why not?

Prompts: *If yes, how did you tell? How did they react? How did it make you feel?*

14. How has your life differed since your release from what it was like before you were imprisoned?

15. Do you have thoughts about going back to prison? If yes, what are they?

16. What other factors not mentioned here do you think would have helped you specifically as an African American male to transition back to society more successfully? Describe.

17. Do you have religious beliefs or values that you follow?

Prompts: *If so, please describe in a nutshell your religious beliefs or the ways in which you approach life in a spiritual sense.*

Have your beliefs changed over time? If so, how?

18. Do you have plans or goals in the next month/year/five years?

Prompts: *If yes, what are they?*

- *Why do you have these goals?*
- *How long has this been your goal?*
- *What do you think it would take for you to achieve these goals?*
- *If no, why don't you have any plans or goals for the future?*

19. Do you have fears for the future? (e.g., not finding a stable job, place to live, getting custody of your children)

Prompts: *If yes, what are they?*

- *What do you think it would take to ensure that this fear that you have does not happen?*

- If no, why don't you have any fears?

Part VIII. Do you think that you could draw a picture of your experience leaving prison?

IF YES: This can look like anything you want. Take as much time as you like.

IF NO: go to question **IX**.

Imagine that an artist wants to draw or paint a picture of your experience. How would you tell them to do this?

(Participant is provided a blank piece of paper pens and pencils. The next questions will guide the interviewer in talking to respondent about what they drew.)

1. Why does your pathway look like it does?
2. Using your picture, would you guide me through your reentry pathway?
3. Are there any features of your experience that are represented by the shape or direction of your pathway?
4. What part of your pathway represents things that really happened to you?
5. Is there anything that could be added to your drawing that would help to visually represent the pathway you took from prison to the community?
 6. IF YES: What would these additions communicate about your experience?
 7. What do you think could be done to help African Americans males to adjust to the community after serving time in prison?
 8. What is the greatest and largest problem you see with individuals, especially African American males who have a history of multiple incarcerations and

are faced with reintegration back into the community? What advice could you lend to these individuals?

Part IX. Is there anything else you would like to add or share about your experience transitioning from prison to the community?

Closing Statement:

Thank you for participating in this study, and for taking the time to answer these questions. You have provided me with the ability to document your perspectives on your post-prison experiences as an investigator and for that I am extremely grateful. I wish you all the best in your reentry process.

One final thing before you leave, after the transcription of our interview is completed, I would like to mail you a copy of the final transcript to review for accuracy. After your review, please send any corrections or comments back to me within one week. I will call you prior to sending the transcription, and give you a requested timeframe to return the transcript with any possible questions. How would you like to handle this?

- 1. I can mail the transcript to you, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the document.*
- 2. I can email the transcript and you can return through email.*
- 3. I can hand-deliver the transcript to the reentry residential home upon completion.*

After sending the transcript, I will follow up with a phone call to remind you and answer any questions. Once you finish reviewing the transcript, please return to me indicating if any changes were made. After I receive your transcript, I will send you a \$75.00 monetary compensation based on your indications in the Informed Consent form.

Would that be okay with you?

1. If yes, ask for their mailing or email address and phone number... (NOTE: If need to leave a message, it will simply say: *“Hi, this is Ms. Lumpkin. I wanted to remind you to send back the transcript in the self-addressed envelope or send by email.”* This will be done to maintain confidentiality in case others hear the message.
2. If no, thank them for their participation, and end the interview.

Announce the end of the interview. Stop the recording device.

This concludes the Interview # on MM/DD/YYYY at XX: XX p.m.

Appendix F: Preliminary Screening of Participants by Telephone Calls

Hello, my name is Chanae Lumpkin, I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I invite you to participate in my research study as part of my dissertation. Your participation is entirely voluntarily. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time. The survey takes at least 45-60 minute in a face-to-face interview with me. After the interview, I will provide you with a copy of the interview, and you will have the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy, add or delete any information that is not accurate. This telephone call is intended to confirm that you fulfill the requirement for this research study. If you do and you want to participate, your personal information will be collected. I will start by asking you some questions;

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Are you an African-American male? | Yes No |
| 2. Do you speak English? | Yes No |
| 3. Do you have a history of multiple incarcerations? | Yes No |
| 4. Were you convicted of a felony? | Yes No |
| 5. Were you in state/federal prison for 1 year or more? | Yes No |
| 6. Would you be able to invest 45-60 minutes for the interview? | Yes No |

Note: Personal information will be collected if respondent meets these six criteria. An African American male, speak English, have a history of multiple incarcerations, was convicted of a felony, served more than one year in a state/federal prison and is willing to invest 45-60 minutes for an interview.

Appendix G: Counseling Referral Telephone Numbers

<u>National Crisis Hotline Numbers</u>	
National Hopeline Network	1-800-784-2433
National Suicide Prevention Hotline	1-800-273-8255
SAMHSA's National Helpline	1-800-662-4357
<u>South Carolina Counseling Referral Numbers</u>	
Canterbury Counseling Center	1-864-235-7501
New Horizon Family Health Services	1-864-729-8330 ext. 2259
City Center Counseling Ministry	1-864-326-3435
Compass of Carolina	1-864-467-3434
Greenville Mental Health Center	1-864-241-1040
Open Path Greenville	1-800-268-2833
CRISISLine	1-864-271-8888
NAMI/NAMI of Greenville	1-800-733-9592/1-864-271-8888
Mental Health America of SC	1-803-779-5363
American Foundation for Suicide-SC	1-803-552-9318