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A Phenomenological Examination of Prisonization and the Psychological Effects of Incarceration

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

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by

Wanda L. Bates

MS, Walden University, 2011

BA, Alvernia College, 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

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August 2018

Abstract

Adjustment to prison culture may influence the development of psychological issues for

some individuals and may contribute to the difficulties of reentry to society, potentially

contributing to the high rates of recidivism. The purpose of this study was to explore

prisonization and its potential psychological effects from the perspective of individuals

who experienced it. The theoretical foundation used to guide this study was the

constructivist self-development theory, which can be used to explain how individuals

may or may not have been affected by their traumatic experience. The participants for

this phenomenological study included 10 individuals who experienced incarceration to

fulfill the purpose of exploring psychological effects that may have developed during

incarceration. The open-ended research questions that were used in this study were

designed to obtain a full description of the prisonization and postincarceration

experience, including any psychological issues that may have resulted from the

incarceration experience. The process of explicitation, which included bracketing,

extracting unique themes, and summarizing, was used to analyze the collected data. The

interviews suggested that symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder may result from the

prisonization experience. It is hoped that the results of this study may bring to awareness

the psychological effects that can develop in some individuals during incarceration and

may contribute to the difficulties of successful reentry to society.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the memory of Mary Knarr: the one person in the world who knew me better than I knew myself and constantly reminded me that I had work to do and to get to it.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Prisonizaton and the Psychological Effects of Incarceration

In this study, I examined the psychological effects that may develop during prisonization and incarceration from the perspective of individuals who have been incarcerated. The demographics of prison inmates whose experiences were explored in this study included race, sex, age, and length of time incarcerated, and were representative of the 2013 penal climate in the United States as identified by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Carson, 2014). The participating individuals, however, were not affected by every circumstance of incarceration. Due to the nature of the incarceration experience and the potential effects on each individual, it would have been difficult to explore every aspect of the incarceration experience in this study.

In 2016 in the United States there were more than 2.2 million individuals incarcerated in local, state, and federal prisons and jails (Carson, 2014; Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014). Researchers have reported that many of those incarcerated individuals suffered from mental illness (Hall et al., 2012; Oliver et al., 2011). There was a lack of research showing that mental illness in many incarcerated individuals may have developed because of prisonization (the adaptation process) and the incarceration experience (Armour, 2012; Lynch et al., 2014). Many of the psychological issues that could develop during the incarceration experience were shown to occur without individuals realizing that they had been psychologically affected (Haney, 2012). These issues may contribute to the difficulties individuals experience in their postincarceration adjustment and can result in their return to prison (Liem & Kundst, 2013). Studies

regarding the adaptation process showed that how individuals survive the prison environment and the incarceration experience may greatly depend on how well an individual adapts to the prison environment (Haney, 2012). How well an individual adapts to and survives the prison culture may also be a clear indicator of how well that individual will adapt to reentry to society postincarceration (Souza & Dhami, 2010).

Psychological issues that research has shown may develop in some individuals include depression, stress, delusions, dissatisfaction with life, claustrophobia, diminished self-worth, conflicts with sexual identity, interpersonal suspicion and distrust, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), social withdrawal, and isolation (Haney, 2005, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014; Tomar, 2013). Mental health professionals are not trained to adequately identify and deal with the psychological issues that may develop in individuals during their adaptation to prison culture (Liem & Kindst, 2013); they lack the knowledge and experience to assist and prepare prisoners who are integrating back into society. Without the proper mental health screening and treatment, many formerly incarcerated individuals run the risk of returning to prison because of their inability to deal with their psychological issues in their postincarceration adjustment (Liem & Kindst, 2013).

The social implication of this study is that if mental health policies were sensitive to the mental health consequences of prisonization and incarceration, it could result in the development of specifically informed prison health care (Schnittker, 2011). It could result in health professionals receiving training to recognize and treat the psychological effects that may develop from the prisonization process and incarceration. This in turn

could result in more individuals successfully reintegrating into society, thus possibly reducing the high rates of recidivism (Liem & Kundst, 2013; Visher & Travis, 2003).

Study Overview

In this chapter, I reviewed the background and the gap in literature regarding prisonization and the psychological issues that may develop as a result of incarceration. I explained the intent of this study, introduced evidence that suggests that incarceration may influence psychological issues in some individuals, and examined the phenomenon of incarceration. I also provided a detailed description of the problem and the purpose of the study, reviewed the research questions and the theoretical framework used to guide this study, and introduced how the theoretical framework related to the prison adaptation process. Also included in this chapter are a description of the nature of the study and the methodology, the terms of the study, the assumptions, scope, delimitations and limitations, and the significance of examining the potential psychological impact of incarceration.

Background of the Problem

Incarceration is a traumatic experience and the potential psychological effects that may result from incarceration are numerous (Haney, 2012). The first documentation of the negative psychological effects that can result from incarceration date back to the first penitentiaries in the United States in 1786 (De Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833; Lynch, 2012; Tomar, 2013). Liem and Kundst (2013) and other researchers have noted that there are a number of studies on the psychological effects of incarceration (Lynch, 2012; Tomar, 2013). Many of those studies, however, were written more than 10 years

ago. Many of these studies included reports of a high number of incarcerated individuals who were diagnosed as mentally ill and incarcerated as a result of their mental illness (Armour, 2012; Lynch et al., 2014). The purpose of these studies was to offer explanations for the difficulties many individuals experienced in the process of reentry into society postincarceration, resulting in the high rates of recidivism (Haney, 2001; Thomas, Petersen, & Cage, 1981; Visher & Travis, 2003). There are a limited number of studies that identify and focus on the psychological effects that may be directly influenced by incarceration (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Picken, 2012; Schnittker & John, 2007). There is an even smaller number of studies that go into detail about prisonization and the effects of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who experienced it (Schnittiker, 2014).

An important factor regarding research on the psychological effects of incarceration is that much of the focus is on individuals who are currently incarcerated (Schnittiker, 2014), and there is no consideration or mention of the psychological effects that may have developed during incarceration and that then may have hindered postprison adjustment (Schnittiker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). It can be construed from those studies that the psychological issues that potentially hindered postprison adjustment in some individuals were developed preincarceration (Haney, 2001; Thomas, Petersen, & Cage, 1981; Visher & Travis, 2003).

A documented reason for the lack of current research into the psychological effects of incarceration is due to the inability of researchers to observe the effects of incarceration firsthand (Schnittiker, 2014). Other reasons for the lack of current research

is that prisoners are a protected population, making researching incarcerated individuals challenging. Lastly, the inability of some inmates to make informed decisions renders them unable to consent to participating in research (Bulman, 2012).

Some researchers have suggested that the psychological effects of incarceration may contribute to the high rates of recidivism (Liem & Kundst, 2013; Visher & Travis, 2003). For that reason, there needs to be more research that explores the extent of the psychological issues that may develop in incarcerated populations, including during the prisonization process. The purpose of this study was to explore prisonization (the process of adaptation to incarceration) and the potential psychological effects that may be a result of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who experienced it and how those effects may potentially impact successful reentry. Much of the existing literature focused on individuals who were incarcerated at the time of the study and did not explore prisonization and the psychological effects that may have developed during incarceration and may have hindered postincarceration adjustment and reentry from the perspective of individuals who lived the experience (Schnittker, 2012).

Problem Statement

Prisionization may contribute to the development of psychological issues in some formerly incarcerated individuals (Bustel & Kilmann, 1980; Haney, 2001; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). Areas for further exploration include prisonization, potential psychological issues (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Picken, 2012; Schnittker & John, 2007), the potential influence of those developed psychological issues on the postincarceration adjustment of some individuals, and how those potential effects

contribute to the high rates of recidivism (Boxer, Middlemass, & Delorenzo, 2009; Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015; Thomas, Peterson, & Cage, 1981).

Lynch (2012) and Schnittker (2014) noted that incarceration can psychologically weaken some individuals to the point where they have difficulty adjusting to life outside of prison. Schnittker (2014) further posited that many of the psychological issues incarcerated individuals might experience may not become disabling until after they are released and trying to adjust back into society. Many health professionals are not aware of the psychological issues incarcerated individuals can experience, nor are they prepared to assist individuals with postincarceration adjustment (Liem & Kundst, 2012). As a result, an increasing number of individuals who are being released from prison are unable to cope with life outside of prison due to the psychological issues that may have developed during their incarceration (Haney, 2001; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012). Research on the prison experience and the effects of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who experienced it is extremely limited (De Veaux, 2013; Haney, 2001, 2012; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). Therapies and treatment programs that will assist individuals in their adjustment postincarceration need to be developed (Haney, 2001; Lynch, 2012).

Through this study, I explored how prisonization, or adaptation to prison culture, may influence the psychological issues that can develop in some individuals during incarceration. I explored the prison and postprison adaption experience and

psychological effects that may have developed as a result of incarceration as perceived by the 10 individuals who lived this experience.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to contribute to the existing literature on prisonization and the psychological effects that can develop by exploring the effects of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who experienced it. Exploring prisonization and the potential psychological effects from the perspective of those who experienced it may provide valuable insight into how individuals adapt to prison culture and the psychological issues that potentially develop during the prisonization process and incarceration. The intent of the study was to directly explore, via formerly incarcerated individuals, what they psychologically experienced immediately prior to, during, and after incarceration. The phenomenon being studied was incarceration and the psychological effects that may develop as a result of incarceration.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do former prisoners describe their psychological health prior to their incarceration?

2. How do former prisoners describe the prison experience?

3. What, if any, are the potential psychological effects of the prison experience as described by former inmates?

4. How do formerly incarcerated individuals describe their postprison adjustment?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical foundation used to guide this study was the constructivist self-development theory (CSDT) that is used to assert that a traumatic event may influence the way some individuals develop their sense of self, and that not all people who experience a traumatic event will be affected by that event (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). CSDT, developed by McCann and Pearlman (1990), integrates the psychoanalytic theories of social learning theory and cognitive development theory with constructivism. CSDT can be used to explain how an individual's personality, personal history, and the content of the traumatic event being experienced may influence how an individual will adapt to any given traumatic situation or event (Saakvitne, Tennen, & Afflect, 1998). CSDT also includes an explanation that perception of an individual's reality and expectation of how an individual's psychological needs will be met are based on past experiences (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). CSDT is used in this study to explain how some incarcerated individuals may develop psychological issues as a result of prisonization and their incarceration experience. CSDT is explained in further detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The methodology that I used for this study was a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design (Heidegger, 2008; Husserl, 1970; Kafle, 2013; van Manen, 1990, 2015). I used this design to examine prisonization and the development of psychological issues that may have resulted from the incarceration experience as interpreted by 10 individuals who experienced it (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 1990). The

10 individuals who were interviewed represented the demographic characteristics of the 2013 penal climate in the United States that have been identified by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, including age, race, sex, and length of time incarcerated (Carson, 2014). Seven African American and two Caucasian participants, males and females, one Hispanic male, two participants who entered prison as juveniles with one released as an adult and one released as a juvenile, a participant who spent more than 30 years in prison, and a participant who spent 2.5 years in prison were interviewed for this study.

I chose hermeneutic phenomenology as the best way to explore incarceration, examining how participants interpret, make sense, and understand their lived incarceration experience (Heidegger, 2008; Larkin & Thompson, 2003; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Laverty, 2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology provides a description and understanding of the "universal essence" or the "nature" of a phenomenon (Heidegger, 2008; Husserl, 1970; Kafle, 2013; van Manen, 1990, 2015). The phenomenon explored in this study was incarceration and how the experience of incarceration may have influenced the development of psychological issues in some individuals. Phenomenology, based on the work of Husserl (1970), is used to posit that events and objects can only be understood in the way human consciousness perceives them and that objects and events cannot be fully understood if they have not been experienced. Heidegger's (2008) hermeneutic phenomenology expands on phenomenology by focusing on how individuals interpret or make sense of the phenomenon they actually experienced (Kafle, 2013). Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on how an

individual understands the meaning of an experience based on their background life experiences (Heidegger, 2008; Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 2015).

As the researcher of this study I collected the data, which consisted of the recorded interviews of 10 formerly incarcerated individuals who are no longer on parole and have no open criminal cases. Individuals who are currently on parole were not invited to participate in this study. They are members of a protected population and there was the possibility that they may not have felt comfortable enough to express themselves freely. Participants were recruited based on their associations with The Wyandanch Community Resource Center in Wyandanch, NY, Man in the Mirror Community and Youth Outreach, the Suffolk County Re-entry Task Force, and by snowballing.

In conducting this study, I acknowledged that it was imperative that I remain aware of my personal knowledge and awareness of the phenomenon of incarceration and how that knowledge could influence the interpretive outcome of this study. To remain objective during the interview process and in interpreting the data, I used reflective bracketing to assure that what emerged were the true reflections of the participants of the study and not my own preconceived knowledge and biases, as described by Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, and Poole (2004). As advised by other qualitative researchers, I kept a reflexive diary to note my thoughts, feelings, and perceptions throughout the study (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013) to identify thoughts, perceptions, and feelings that could influence the neutrality of this study (Ahern, 1999). All interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed by me using Groenwald's (2004) 5-step explicitation process. This process is a simplified version of Hycner's (1985) 15-step explicitation

process of examining a phenomenon as a whole. The 5-step process includes bracketing, delineating units of meaning, clustering of units of meaning to form themes, summarizing and validating the interviewed data, and extracting unique themes and developing a summary (Gooenwald, 2004). No published instruments were used to gather information. Interview questions were semistructured, open-ended conversational questions that were designed to yield as much information as possible regarding participants' incarceration and postincarceration experiences, including any psychological effects that may have developed as a result of those experiences (see Appendix C).

Operational Definitions

There are many terms and labels found in the literature review that describe and explain prisonization and the incarceration experience. For purposes of clarity, the following terms have been used in this study:

Deindividualization: When the sense of individuality, uniqueness, self-regulation, and sense of responsibility for self is decreased (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012).

Indigenous Adaptation: Encompasses the learning of the norms, customs and folkways of prison culture (Dhami, Ayton & Loewenstein, 2007; Haney, 2001; Wooldredge, 1999).

Importation Adaptation: Notion that individuals bring the ideas and learned behaviors of their past experiences into the prison culture (Dhami et al., 2007; Paterline & Petersen, 1999; Ricciardelli, 2014; Tewksbury, Connor & Denney, 2014; Wooldredge, 1999).

Institutionalization: Socialization that occurs within an institutional setting (Haney, 2012; Tomar, 2013).

Mass incarceration: The accelerated growth of the numbers of incarcerated individuals within the past four decades (Alexander, 2012; Haney, 2012).

Pains of imprisonment: Used to indicate the prison experiences that are described as being the most difficult and damaging and that may potentially result in psychological issues. Feelings of regrets and concerns are included as pains of imprisonment (Rocheleau, 2013; Sykes, 2007).

Prisonization: Used to describe the process of how individuals adapt to prison culture (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2012).

Psychological hardiness: The ability to remain cool under pressure, high self-esteem, and immunity to anxiety (Sandvik, Hansen, Hystad, John, & Bartone, 2015).

Prison code: Unspoken codes or guidelines regarding how inmates interact with each other and prison guards (Haney, 2012; Paterline & Petersen, 1999; Sykes, 2007).

Solitary confinement: The separation of individuals from the general population who pose a risk to themselves or others, or to protect those who may be at risk in the general population (Arrigo & Bullock, 2008; Lynch, 2012).

Vicarious traumatization: A potential effect of trauma on individuals who work with traumatized victims wherein the worker absorbs some of the feelings of the survivor's trauma (Pearlman & Mac Ian, 1995).

Assumptions

The following are assumptions I had regarding this study. I assumed that formerly incarcerated individuals would be willing to openly and honestly discuss their incarceration experience as accurately and in as much detail as possible. A second assumption was that those who were formerly incarcerated may not be aware of the potential psychological effects they may have experienced during their incarceration, and then again when they were released that may have affected their readjustment to society. My final assumption was that there are some individuals now living productive lives who did experience some type of psychological effects resulting from their incarceration but are not aware of these psychological impacts.

Scope and Delimitations

The aspects of the psychological effects of incarceration that were explored in this study are the specific events and instances of prisonization and the incarceration experience, as described by formerly incarcerated individuals, which may be attributed to the development of psychological issues in some individuals. This area of focus is necessary to highlight how individuals adapted to those experiences and the psychological effects that may have resulted as a result of that adaptation and the incarceration experience.

The boundaries of this study were participants who were released from prison and have no current involvement with the criminal justice system. Individuals who are incarcerated at the time of this study or on parole were not invited to participate in this study due to their status as members of a protected and vulnerable population.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the small sample size. Efforts were made to examine one participant from each of the identified demographic categories that represent current prison populations as reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Carson, 2014). The demographic categories based on the 2013 penal climate are race, age, sex, and length of time incarcerated (Carson, 2014). My personal bias is that psychological trauma experienced during incarceration impacts the postincarceration experience. I acknowledged this bias based on my experiences as a New York City probation officer, New York State parole officer, and program specialist in the mental health unit of a maximum-security prison. I nonetheless conducted this study as objectively as I could to learn what emerged from it, including the possibility of discovering that my biases were incorrect.

Significance

While researchers report on the number of individuals within the prison system who are mentally ill (Armour, 2012; Lynch et al., 2014), they do not indicate that some mental illness experienced by incarcerated populations may have developed as the result of prisonization and the incarceration experience (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Picken, 2012; Schnittker & John, 2007). The purpose of this study was to contribute to the existing scholarly literature regarding prisonization, the prison experience, and the potential psychological effects that may be directly influenced by the incarceration experience (Schnittker, 2014). The outcome of this study indicated that incarcerated individuals could develop psychological issues during incarcerations. It is

my hope that more mental health professionals be made aware of and recognize the psychological effects of incarceration, and that treatments that specifically deal with those psychological effects be developed so that many more inmates may receive assistance prior to their release from incarceration to better prepare them for their successful reintegration into society (see Liem & Kundst, 2013).

It is also my hope that the social change contribution of this study initiates a review of the current mental health procedures with regard to the psychological evaluation of incarcerated persons who are preparing to be released to parole or at the maximum expiration of their sentence. With the knowledge of the psychological effects that may result from incarceration, health professionals may be better prepared to assist formerly incarcerated individuals in their reintegration to society, thus reducing the high rates of recidivism that may result from poor adjustment to reintegration (Liem & Kundst, 2013).

Summary

As a result of prisonization, the adaptation to prison culture, and the incarceration experience, psychological issues may develop in some incarcerated individuals (Armour, 2012; Lynch et al., 2014). These psychological issues may contribute to the difficulties individuals may experience in their postincarceration adjustment and possibly result in their returning back to prison (Liem & Kundst, 2013).

The psychological effects of incarceration are well documented (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Picken, 2012; Schnittker & John, 2007); however, the existing documentation does not include an exploration of the prisonization process of individuals

while they were incarcerated (Tomar, 2013), nor does it include the potential

psychological effects of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who lived the

experience of being incarcerated (De Veaux, 2013; Haney, 2001, 2012; Liem & Kunst,

2013; Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014). The intent of this study was to bridge that gap in

the scholarly literature. Chapter 2 includes a review of current and past literature on

incarceration, the prisonization process, and the psychological effects that may develop in

individuals as a result of their incarceration experience.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There is limited research on prisonization and the psychological effects that may develop in some incarcerated individuals as a result of incarceration. There are few studies on the prison experience and the potential psychological effects that can develop from the perspective of individuals who experienced it (Schnittiker, 2014). Research studies have revealed the high number of incarcerated individuals with mental disorders; however, the researchers in some of these studies posited that individuals are either incarcerated as a result of their diagnosed mental illness or that they came into the prison system with undiagnosed mental illnesses (Armour et al., 2014). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore prisonization and the psychological effects that may develop from the incarceration experience and how these psychological issues can impact successful reentry into society.

There are currently more than 2.2 million individuals incarcerated in the United States (Travis et al., 2014). The Bureau of Justice Statistics researchers tracked 404,638 prisoners released in 2005 and concluded that 67.8% of those released prisoners were rearrested within 3 years of their release, 76.6% were rearrested within 5 years of their release, and of those prisoners who were rearrested, 56.7% were rearrested within the first year of their release (National Institute of Justice, 2014).

Studies on recidivism include hypotheses on why many formerly incarcerated individuals have difficulties readjusting to life outside of prison and returning to prison within a few years of their release (Berg & Hubner, 2011; Bureau of Justice Statistics,

2014; Koschmann & Peterson, 2013; Schnittker, 2014). A few of the hypotheses are the stigma of being involved in the legal system, the difficulty many have in finding jobs because of that stigma, and the lack of education and marketable skills (Schnittker & Massoglia, 2011). There are a limited number of studies that focus on the psychological effects that seem to develop as a result of prisonization and incarceration or that even identify what psychological effects there are (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Picken, 2012; Schnittker & John, 2007). This study addresses this lack of research; the following factors involved with the prison experience that will be explored in this study include the history of the penal system in the United States, the first reports of the psychological effects of incarceration, prisonization, the influences of adaptation, CSDT, the prison experience, the pains of imprisonment, and the psychological effects of incarceration.

Literature Search Strategy

A search of the Walden University Library databases provided the majority of articles. Most of the articles that I located were through Google Scholar, which accesses articles from Walden University's databases and other university libraries. The keywords and phrases used to search this topic were *the psychological effects of incarceration; post incarceration syndrome; incarceration; penology; traumatic grief; detention related psychological problems; prisoner psychology; interpersonal trauma; prison mental health; recidivism; PTSD; Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; the trauma of incarceration; post incarceration; post incarceration syndrome; prisonization; selfhood; selfhood after traumatic confinement; traumatic memories; solitary confinement; and the pains of imprisonment.*

A search of Google Scholar using the keywords *psychological effects of incarceration* yielded many articles that contained the search term *psychological effects* and other terms such as *imprisonment of confined individuals, psychological effects of incarceration on the families of Negro prisoners, effects of incarceration on health, side effects of incarceration, effects of incarceration on criminal psychology,* and *the psychological impact of incarceration*. An expanded search using these topics yielded many the keywords previously noted. The keywords *the psychological effects of incarceration* were used to search the SAGE Premier, ERIC, Psych ARTICLES, PsycCRITIQUES, PsycEXTRA, ProQuest, Medline, Criminal Justice, Oxford Criminology Bibliographies, and LegalTrac databases. There are studies on the psychological effects of incarceration; however, many of the articles are dated, some more than 10 years old (Boxer, Middlemass, & Delorenzo, 2009; Bukstel, & Kilmann, 1980; Haney, 2001). The latest of these articles were used in this review.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation that was be used to guide this study is the CSDT, a trauma theory developed by McCann and Pearlman (1990). CSDT can be used to assert that not all people who experience a traumatic event will be affected by it and that a traumatic event may influence the way some individuals develop their sense of self (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). The five areas of the self, or personality characteristics, that are affected by trauma are frame of reference, self-capacities, psychological needs, ego resources, and perceptual and memory systems (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). Researchers have argued that each time individuals experience a traumatic event, they

gradually develop beliefs regarding their safety, self-esteem, intimacy, trust, and self-control (McCann & Pearlman, 1990, 1992a; Miller, Flores, & Pitcher, 2010).

CSDT integrates the psychoanalytic theories of social learning theory and cognitive development theory with constructivism (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). Social learning theory was developed by Bandura (1977), who theorized that learning is a cognitive process that is influenced by environmental factors such as observation, instruction, or modeling. Piaget (1976) developed the cognitive development theory, theorizing that intelligence is a cognitive process, which develops in four major stages from birth to adulthood and is influenced by social and cultural factors. Constructivism is a theory about how people learn and create their own realities and understanding of their realities through their experiences (Mahoney, 1981). Constructivism can be used to explain how an individual's sense of self or self-identity gradually develops over time, and this sense of self is influenced by an individual's cultural and social factors (Mahoney, 1981).

CSDT theorizes how individual factors such as the personality of an individual, an individual's personal history, and the content of the traumatic event being experienced can influence how an individual will adapt to any given traumatic situation or event (Saakvitne, Tennen, & Affleck, 1998). CSDT also theorizes that individuals perceive their reality and their expectations of how their psychological needs will be met based on their past experiences (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). CDST acknowledges that some individuals' beliefs or schemas may be based on their perceptions of their reality and that those perceptions may be distorted and there cannot be assurance that individuals'

perceptions of their past experiences are accurate (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). The development of psychological issues while incarcerated may be dependent on how well an individual adapts to the prison environment (Haney, 2012; Souza & Dhami, 2010), which may also influence an individual's adaptation postincarceration (Souza & Dhami, 2010).

Several researchers used the CSDT as a framework to understand how individuals adapt and respond to trauma and as a guide for developing treatments for individuals who are affected by trauma (McCann & Pearlman, 1992a, 1992b; Miller, Flores, & Pitcher, 2010; Saakvitne, Tennen, & Affleck, 1998). CSDT is used extensively to study and understand vicarious traumatization, which can be an effect of trauma on individuals who work with traumatized victims (Pearlman, & Mac Ian, 1995). Individuals who regularly deal with trauma survivors (e.g., police and social workers) develop their own adaptations to the trauma of other people based on their own traumatic memories and schemas (McCann & Pearlman, 1992a). Vicarious trauma may create anger, guilt, fear, irritability, and difficulty controlling intense emotions in individuals who work with traumatized victims (McCann & Pearlmann, 1990). CSDT is also used to understand how judges (Miller et al., 2010), students (McCann & Pearlman, 1992a), and other individuals adapt to severe trauma (McCann & Pearlman, 1992b).

The rationale for choosing CSDT to study the psychological effects of incarceration was based on Haney (2012) suggesting that an individual's coping and adaptation to incarceration may be a determining factor in the development of psychological issues while incarcerated. Haney posited that not all incarcerated

individuals develop psychological issues while incarcerated and that individuals'

adaptation to prison culture may determine their psychological adjustment while

incarcerated and postincarceration. CSDT supports Haney's position in that it explains

how an individual's history of past experiences may be a factor in how a person will

adapt to the traumas of incarceration and influence whether an individual will develop

psychiatric issues (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). Wooldredge (1999) also stressed that an

individual's psychosocial characteristics as the determining factor of an individual's

ability to cope with incarceration. Wooldredge documented that the stress and anxiety

individuals may develop during incarceration is dependent on the individual's ability to

satisfy personal needs, which is the underlying basis for the ability to psychologically

adapt to the prison environment. The ability to identify those needs is necessary for

developing ways of adapting to the prison culture (Wooldredge, 1999). Toch (1977)

identified the needs that are crucial to adapting to the prison environment as privacy,

safety, structure, support, emotional feedback, social stimulation, activity, and freedom.

CSDT theorized that an individual's need for safety, trust, self-esteem, intimacy, power,

independence, and frame of reference are developed over time, and are dependent on an

individual's past traumatic experiences (McCann & Pearlmann, 1990).

<div align="center">**Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**</div>

History of The Psychological Effects of Incarceration

Reports of the psychological effects that can result from incarceration date back to

the first prison established in the United States in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1786 (De

Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833; Lynch, 2012; Tomar, 2013). In the 18th century, the

penal system in the United States was formed by the Quakers in protest against the harsh

corporal punishment brought over from England with the original colonies (Barnes, 1921;

De Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833). After many pleadings, the Pennsylvania State

Legislature abolished death, mutilations, and public whippings, resulting in the

establishment of the first penitentiary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Barnes, 1921; De

Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833).

The Quakers believed that silence and solitude would encourage inmates to repent

from their criminal behavior and lead more socially acceptable lives. Prisoners were

classified based on the type of crimes they committed and whether they were debtors,

religious, or political offenders (Barnes, 1921). Those who were found guilty of capital

crimes, or who were resistant to the rules of the prison, were placed in isolation cells and

were not permitted to work (Cloud, Drucker, Browne, & Parsons, 2015; De Beaumont &

De Tocqueville, 1833). By 1821 prison officials reported that solitary confinement

created symptoms of psychosis and other psychological effects, and occasionally death,

in individuals who were isolated for 24 hours a day without natural light, proper

ventilation, and human contact (De Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833). By 1823 the

practice of solitary confinement was denounced as being detrimental to the mental health

of prisoners and as being ineffective in reforming individuals from criminal behavior

(Bennion, 2015; De Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833). As a result of the

denouncement of solitary confinement, the use of solitary confinement was revised, and

prisoners were allowed to work during the day but had to work in silence and were placed

back in solitary confinement at night (De Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833). By 1890

prisons and jails in the United States stopped using solitary confinement as a form of

rehabilitation. By 1934 with the openings of Alcatraz Prison in California and Marion

penitentiary in Illinois, solitary confinement was instituted again for the purpose of

separating inmates who were classified as the most violent and threatening (Cloud et al.,

2015). Solitary confinement is widely used in prisons today (Frost & Monteiro, 2016)

and there is a plethora of studies that document the psychological effects of solitary

confinement (Alexander, 2015; Arrigo & Bullock, 2008; Gallagher, 2014; Hagan et al.,

2017; Shames et. al., 2015; Weir, 2012).

Prisonization

Prisonization is the term coined by Clemmer (1940) in his classic work *The*

Prison Community. The term is used to describe the process of how individuals adapt to

prison culture (Clemmer, 1940). The process of adaptation to incarceration and the

traumatic stressors of incarceration that Clemmer described in his book have not changed

since Clemmer's research on the process of prisonization back in 1940. Research

regarding how individuals survive the prison culture show that survival is greatly

dependent on how well an individual adapts to the prison environment (Haney, 2012;

Souza & Dhami, 2010). How well an individual survives the prison culture is also an

indication of how well that individual will adapt postincarceration (Souza & Dhami,

2010). Theories on how individuals adapt to prison culture note that there are identifiable

factors that may influence how well an individual will adapt to the prison culture (Dhami

et al., 2007; Haney, 2012; Tewksbury, Connor, & Denney, 2014; van der Laan &

Eichelsheim, 2013). Factors such as education, employment, social contact with people

outside of the prison, political, social, and economic attitudes are influences that may determine how an individual will adapt to prison culture (Alonzo, 1979; Haney, 2012). Researchers have theorized that adaptation can be by indigenous means, which encompass the learning of the norms, customs, and folkways of prison culture (Dhami et al., 2007; Haney, 2001; Wooldredge, 1999). Other researchers have theorized that adaptation to prison is by importation, meaning that individuals bring the ideas and learned behaviors of their past experiences into the prison culture (Dhami et al., 2007; Paterline & Petersen, 1999; Ricciardelli, 2014; Tewksbury et al., 2014; Wooldredge 1999). Quickly learning and adapting to the patterns of behavior, thinking, and how to interact with other incarcerated individuals and prison staff is crucial for surviving in prison culture (Paterline & Petersen, 1999). Haney (2002) documented that once an individual makes the decision to adapt to the prison culture, his acceptance initiates the gradual psychological transformation to institutionalization. Individuals internalize their prison life naturally and willingly go along with the transformation unaware that they are experiencing a psychological transformation (2002).

One strategy incarcerated individuals use to cope with the reality of their situation is to hold back their thinking with regard to long-term expectations of what they want in their future and focus only on the short-term goal of surviving in the prison (Schnittker & Massoglia, 2011; Schnittker, 2015). The rationale behind this strategy is that by focusing only on the present, it eases the disappointment of looking further than their present situation, making it easier to focus on developing strategies necessary for dealing with any situation that may occur at any given moment. Schnittker and Massoglia (2011)

suggested that this view not only limits future planning for life postincarceration, but also hinders any thinking about the possibilities for readjustment postincarceration. The potential development of psychological effects while incarcerated is different for each individual (Haney, 2012; Tomar, 2013). The same holds true in regard to the erroneous belief that all prisons are the same (Haney, 2012). The conditions in all prisons are not the same and whether an individual is housed in a maximum or medium security facility has no bearing on whether he or she will develop psychological issues while incarcerated (Haney, 2012). The personal characteristics of the inmate will be an important factor as to how any individual will adjust to incarceration (Haney, 2012). For example, individuals who possess the personality traits of psychological hardiness (i.e., the ability to remain cool under pressure, high self-esteem, and immunity to anxiety) are less likely to develop psychological issues while incarcerated due to their ability to handle the stresses of prison (Sandvik, Hansen, Hystad, Johnson, & Bartone, 2015). Incarcerated women have different experiences than men and are more likely to develop psychological issues resulting from their incarceration due to their preincarceration exposure to rape and domestic violence (Lynch, Fritch, & Heath, 2012).

Haney (2005) documents that the psychological transformation incarcerated individuals experience can occur as a result of the impeding of their mental and social development, undermining their present and future wellbeing, and limiting their ability to adjust to life outside of the prison environment. Van Voorhis (1993) noted that federal prisons are comprised of professional and less violent offenders, rendering their prison experience less traumatic and different than those who are incarcerated in state

institutions. Long-term exposure to the extreme trauma of incarceration can influence the development of mental disorders, which can potentially increase the risk of returning to prison (Haney, 2012; Liem & Kundst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014).

Debates in the current literature hypothesize how the adaptation process affects inmates and whether or not the adaptation process has anything to do with influencing the psychological effects that can and do occur (Armour, 2012; Dhami et al., 2007; MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1985). MacKenzie and Goodstein (1985) note that there is no correlation between the adaptation to prison culture and the developing of psychological effects and argue that psychological effects occur only after long-term incarceration (MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1985; Rocheleau, 2013). Rocheleau (2013) also noted that some researchers argue that short-term incarceration yields no adverse psychological effects and that race may not be a contributing factor as to how an individual will adapt to prison culture.

The debate on how individuals adapt to prison culture may continue indefinitely; however, the fact that incarceration will eventually have a profound effect on the way an individual feel, thinks, and acts cannot ever be disputed (Haney, 2012).

Pains of Imprisonment

The phrase "pains of imprisonment" was coined by Sykes (2007) and was an expansion of Clemmer's (1940) *Prison Community*. The popular term is used to characterize the prison experiences that most prisoners describe as being the most difficult and damaging, and that may potentially result in the development of psychological issues (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 2007). The "pains of imprisonment" refers

to more than the obvious physical pains that are identified in prisonization, such as the loss of individual freedom and autonomy, the lack of personal security, the lack of goods and services, and the lack of heterosexual relationships. The term may also refer to individuals having regrets about their past, missing family and friends, having concerns about what is going to happen to them while in prison, their future, the stealing of personal possessions, being extorted, boredom, excessive noise, poor choice of food, lack of proper facilities, and the lack of privacy (Rocheleau, 2013). The above-mentioned factors are examples of the pains of imprisonment that can influence the deterioration of an incarcerated individual's self-image (Haney, 2012; Rocheleau, 2013).

The Prison Environment and Culture

The prison environment, regardless of the conditions of the prison and whether the prison is maximum or minimum security, federal, state, or county, is an extremely stressful and traumatic environment (DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2005) and can influence the development of psychological issues in some individuals (Haney, 2012; Schnittker, 2014). Mass incarceration has increased in the past three decades with reports of the stress of being incarcerated increasing ten-fold (Haney, 2001). Individuals entering into the prison system are expected to adhere to a strict institutional routine, which outlines when they sleep, wake, shower, eat, attend school, work in their prison jobs, visit with family and friends, have recreation (DeVeaux, 2013; Parsell, 2013), and when they must submit to regular strip searches (Berger, 2003). In essence, individuals are stripped of their liberty and individuality with the assignment of a number and a prison uniform that is the same color as all other inmates assigned in the same prison (Parsell, 2013).

Inmates identify each other by their surname or their street name and are identified by the

prison administration by their inmate number (Berger, 2003; DeVeaux, 2013). Inmates

have no autonomy and the only decisions they can freely make are those that have to do

with how they will adjust to institutionalization (Haney, 2012; Tomar, 2013). Every

aspect of incarceration is monitored and recorded; including some visits and phone calls

(Berger, 2003; Bulman, 2012). In the men's prisons, there are no private showers or

private use of a lavatory (Parsell, 2013). Basic hygiene maintenance occurs inside of

their cells in plain view of cellmates and other inmates and guards passing by their cells

(Parsell, 2013). Most prisons have barbershops and hair salons that are operated by other

inmates solely for the maintenance of personal grooming of inmates (Berger, 2003;

Parsell, 2013).

       According to Clemmer (1940), prison culture includes loyalty to other inmates,

toughness, rejection of the administrative culture, and no snitching (Akerström, 1989).

Snitching is the disclosing to prison authorities, or any other law enforcement official, of

any crimes or incidents that may occur either inside or outside of the prison environment

(Boxer, Middlemass, & Delorenzo, 2009). A commonly known phrase used as a threat

both inside and outside of prison is "snitches get stitches" (Akerström, 1989; DeVeaux,

2013).

       The patterns of behavior and ways of thinking that are common place inside of

prisons are internalized and eventually become a natural way of living while incarcerated

(Clemmer, 1940; Chong, 2013). Being powerless, adopting the regulations and structure

of the prison, and taking on a passive attitude when it comes to personal needs, are

universal factors of the prison culture that are necessary for adjusting to and surviving in the prison culture (Clemmer, 1940). Inmates must accept that the institution will provide for all of their social and personal needs (Clemmer, 1940). Inmates must also adopt the "prison code" or "value system." These unwritten inmate codes are the guidelines for how inmates are expected to behave and interact with other inmates, and with guards (Paterline & Petersen, 1999; Sykes, 2007). Although the inmate code is an accepted part of prison culture, it is not acceptable behavior in a free society (Sykes, 2007). The most traumatic of prison experiences is the physical and sexual victimization (Maschi, Gibson, Zgoba, & Morgen, 2011; Parcell, 2013). Some inmates resort to violence as a coping mechanism to manage the constant threats of victimization (Ricciardelli, 2014).

The devastating effects of inmates adapting to and internalizing the prison culture are the tearing down of self-esteem and the enhancement of psychological effects (Paterline & Petersen, 1999). The psychological effects of prisonization may not be noticeable while an individual is incarcerated but become more apparent once individuals are released from incarceration and begin their reentry to society (Haney, 2012). The psychological effects are reversible; however, individuals have extreme difficulty in making those changes on their own (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2001; Liebling & Maruna, 2013). Haney (2012), Liebling and Maruna (2013), have contributed extensive research on the psychological effects of incarceration and document the lack of awareness and interest in the effects of incarceration.

Within the last century, the concept of prison has changed from reform and rehabilitation to mass incarceration and punishment and with this, an increase in the

harmful psychological damage resulting from incarceration (Haney, 2001; Lynch, 2012).

The pains of imprisonment no longer refers solely to the discomfort one experiences

while incarcerated, but now includes the intentional abuse by prison guards that inmates

complain about in the prison system as it is today (Crewe, 2012). The rates of traumatic

stress experienced by prison inmates is higher than the rates of traumatic stress

experienced by the general population of the United States (Maschi et al., 2011).

Mass Incarceration

Mass incarceration refers to the accelerated growth and expansion of incarcerated

individuals within the past four decades (Alexander, 2012). Alexander (2012) eloquently

outlines how mass incarceration is the result of a shift in attitude by lawmakers who felt

the need to be tough on crime in order to curb the growing war on drugs and focused their

targets on persons and communities of color. The war on drugs resulted in a rapid

growth of incarcerated individuals from a few hundred thousand in the 70's to more than

two million today (Alexander, 2012; Enns, 2014).

Characteristics of mass incarceration that contribute to the development of

negative psychological effects include overcrowding, dehumanization, deprivation

danger, the lack of constructive activities and programs, solitary confinement, cruelty,

deindividualization, and the increase of the mentally ill housed with the general

population (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012). Each of these factors can increase the negative

impact of incarceration (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012). Both Haney (2012) and Lynch

(2012) note that a number of states intentionally implement prison policies that are

designed to create discomfort, pain, and inflict humiliation on its prisoners as part of their

tough stance on the war on criminals. Prison overcrowding is an inevitable result of mass incarceration and significantly affects the psychological wellbeing of incarcerated individuals (Lynch, 2012). Psychologically adjusting to social interactions while incarcerated is constant and continuous and impacts personal wellbeing. Disabling stress often results from the overcrowding and can lead to serious health complications (Haney, 2015).

Solitary Confinement

Solitary confinement is described in some literature as the most stressful and dehumanizing experience in the prison experience and can contribute to the development of the most severe psychological issues experienced by inmates (Metzner & Fellner, 2010; Shames, Wilcox, & Subramanian, 2015; Story, 2014; Weir, 2014). Solitary confinement is referred to by prison authorities as administrative segregation and is used to either remove inmates who pose a risk to themselves or others, or to protect those who may be at risk in the general population (Arrigo & Bullock, 2008; Lynch, 2012).

Inmates who are housed in solitary confinement are exposed to unhealthy living conditions, which are stressful and psychologically traumatizing for days, months, and even years. The living space is extremely small and contains a cot, toilet, sink, small desk which is bolted to the floor and walls, and a small narrow window which limits the natural sunlight and fresh air (Cloud, Drucker, Browne, & Parson, 2015). The cells are illuminated day and night with bright fluorescent lights. The constant light and outbursts from other inmates interferes with the natural circadian sleep rhythms. Inmates are

allowed out of their cells for recreation for one hour in 24-hour intervals (Cloud et al., 2015).

Psychological effects that have been observed in individuals who are housed in solitary confinement include: the loss of weight due to poor appetite, anxiety, panic attacks, rage, inability to control impulses and emotions, paranoia, hallucinations, and self-mutilations (Haney, 2012). The more serious psychological effects of solitary confinement are an increase in negative attitudes, insomnia, hypersensitivity, ruminations, cognitive dysfunction, irritability, aggression, hopelessness, depression, emotional breakdown, and suicidal ideation and behavior (Haney, 2012).

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funded a longitudinal study (O'Keefe, Klebe, Stucker, Sturm, & Leggett, 2011) and concluded that during the course of a year, the participants of their study did not experience any psychological effects resulting from their year in solitary confinement, and that their psychological well-being actually improved (Bulman, 2012; O' Keefe et al., 2011). The results of this study contradict other studies that document the severe and damaging effects of solitary confinement (Bennion, 2015; De Beaumont, & De Tocqueville, 1833; Grassians, 2006; Haney, 2001). In reviewing the test methods, there were a number of limitations that resulted in these controversial results. The only prison studied was the Colorado prison system, where the living conditions are not as restrictive as other prisons (Bulman, 2012). Only literate adult men were studied, prisoners with serious mental illnesses were excluded from the study, and most importantly, the researchers were not psychologists nor were the results examined by psychologists (Bulman, 2012).

Stanford Prison Experiment

Several researchers (De Veaux, 2013; Lynch, 2012; Tomar, 2013) mention the Stanford Prison Experiment in support of their position that adjusting to incarceration can be psychologically traumatizing with the impacts lasting long after postincarceration. In 1971, Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, and Jaffe (1972) sought to explore imprisonment and the social, impersonal, and psychological effects, as part of an initiative for prison reform (Banuazizi & Movahedi, 1975).

The Stanford Prison Experiment (1972) is an unprecedented documentation of the psychological personality traits of becoming a prisoner or a prison guard (Zimbardo, 2007). What makes this study so unique is that it was a complete failure in examining what it intended, and the unexpected effects that did result raised more questions and provided more insight into the human psyche than had ever been explored before (Lynch, 2012; Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, & Jaffe, 1972). The initial purpose of the study was to show how easily individuals adapt to predefined roles, the behaviors that are required in those roles, and how easily individuals in their pretend roles can ignore their own sense of personal morals and judgment while in those roles (Zimbardo et al., 1972). The students who participated in the study responded to a newspaper advertisement seeking paid male volunteers to participate in a psychological study examining prison life (Banuazizi & Movahedi, 1975). The respondents were examined and those who were deemed the most mentally and psychologically stable were chosen. The participants were from middleclass backgrounds and demonstrated the least amount of antisocial behaviors. They were assigned to the roles of prison guards and inmates in a mock prison

environment and were required to sign forms with the stipulations that they would agree to play either role for a maximum of two weeks. It was stipulated that those who were role-playing as inmates could expect to be under constant surveillance, harassed, and some of their basic civil rights violated (i.e., strip searched, sprayed with a hose, and their heads shaved). In essence, participants could expect to be totally humiliated (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973b; Zimbardo, 2007). Those who were role playing as guards were not given any training as to how to be prison guards but were free to do whatever they thought was necessary, within limits, to maintain order and respect within the simulated prison (Haney et al., 1973b). The guards were encouraged to make up their own rules, which were then enforced by a warden, played by a graduate student (Haney et al., 1973b). All aspects of the plan were stipulated, including how the study would begin with their arrests by the local police department at their homes on a Sunday morning (Haney et al., 1973b). In exchange for their participation, they would be given clothes, food, housing, medical care, and $15 a day for the entirety of the experiment (Banuazizi & Movahedi, 1975).

The experiment was ended after only six days due to the damaging psychological effects to the students who were role playing as prisoners (Zimbardo, Maslach, & Haney, 2000). The experiment started out without incident; however, by the second day, a rebellion broke out with the prisoners barricading themselves inside their cells by placing their beds against the door. The guards immediately perceived the prisoners as being dangerous and proceeded to inflict harsh and inhumane treatment on the prisoners in an effort to show who had the power and who did not (Zimbardo, 2007). The responses to

the rebellion left clear indications of mental and emotional distress, and even mental break down experienced by the individuals who were playing the role of a prisoner (Lynch, 2012). A number of students experienced acute emotional disturbance, disorganized thinking, fits of rage, and uncontrollable crying (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973a). Some also experienced a loss of their personal identity, which resulted from their behavior being controlled to the point where they experienced dependency, depression, helplessness, and developed a sense of passivity (Haney et al., 1973a). Some students even became obedient and totally dependent on the guards and prison environment (Lynch, 2012). The participants who were prisoners experienced cruel and dehumanizing abuse by the individuals who were role playing as prison guards (Zimbardo et al., 2000) and by those who stood by and watched the abuses (Lynch, 2012). Those who played the role of guards became severely aggressive and dehumanizing towards the role-playing inmates and became gratified with their gain in social power and status (Haney et al., 1973a). They became sadistic, tormenting, and inflicted cruel and unusual punishment on the role-playing prisoners. The prisoners were forced to strip and parade around naked and forced to participate in humiliating games and activities the role-playing guards thought were fun (Zimbardo, 2007). The study was so realistic that some parents of the participants who witnessed the run-down appearance of their sons refused to pull their sons out of the experiment out of the fear of appearing to be making trouble by challenging the system (Zimbardo, 2007). Although all individuals were role-playing, the psychological effects experienced by the role-playing

inmates clearly reflect the traumatizing effects of the prison experience for some

individuals (Zimbardo et al., 2000).

Banuazizi and Movahedi (1975) refute the effects of the experiment, positing that

some aspects of the experiment were exaggerations of what goes on in a real prison, and

that the simulated prison experiment results could not be construed as a valid indication

of coping responses similar to a real prison environment because the participants were

pretending, and their responses were based on their preconceived ideas of how guards

and inmates act in a real prison environment. This argument ignores the real

psychological effects a number of the students experienced as a result of their

participation in their simulated roles (Zimbardo et al., 2000). Banauazizi and Movahedi

(1975) dismiss the idea that simulated role-playing can produce the same social behaviors

as a real situation. They support their argument further by implying that the

psychological effects of institutionalized racism and social inequality experienced by

Blacks in the United States could not be studied through the simulation of discriminating

variables with Whites playing the roles of Blacks (Banuazizi & Movahedi, 1975). The

brown eyed/blue eyed diversity experiment conducted in 1968 in a 3rd grade classroom in

Riceville, Iowa, contradicts that argument. In 1968 after the assassination of Martin

Luther King Jr., Jane Elliott, a 3rd grade elementary school teacher, conducted a diversity

experiment with her young students (Bloom, 2005; Peters, 1987). The students were

divided into two groups, those with blue eyes and those with brown eyes. Elliott

attributed and inflicted on the blue-eyed students the stereotyped beliefs and physically

discriminating limitations experienced by African Americans in Jim Crow America, the

period in America from 1877 until the 1950's when segregation was legal and enforced (Peters, 1987). Those who were brown eyed were extended the privilege and respected treatment of the White majority in America (Peters, 1987). The effects of the diversity exercise were both devastating and lasting for the students who participated in the experiment, and clearly demonstrated that Whites can and did experience the psychological effects of institutionalized racism within a controlled experimental environment (Bloom, 2005; Peters, 1987).

The results of the Stanford Experiment further expanded on the results of the study on obedience by Stanley Milgram (1963). Milgram (1963) sought out to investigate the actions of authority figures involved in the Nazi killings in World War II, to determine if their actions of committing atrocities against ordinary people were the result of complying with the orders of their superiors. In this experiment, participants drew straws to determine their role of either learner or teacher. The learner was strapped to a chair with electrodes and given a list of words to learn. The learner was then tested by the teacher and asked to recall the word that is best associated with the original word from a list of four possibilities. The teacher was directed to administer an electric shock whenever the learner made a mistake and to increase the level of the shock with each mistake (Milgram, 1963). The learner intentionally gave wrong answers and in response, the teacher was directed by the experimenter to administer a shock. When the teacher refused to give a shock, the experimenter ordered and prodded the teacher until the teacher complied in administering a shock with every wrong answer (Milgram, 1963). The results proved conclusively that ordinary people will follow orders, even to the

extent of killing innocent people if they believe that the directives are from an authority figure they acknowledge as being legally right (Milgram, 1973). Milgram (1973) mentions the man who dropped the Cyclon-b into the gas chambers in the German concentration camps to support his hypothesis that individuals will justify their behavior, including killing, by acknowledging that they are following orders (Milgram, 1973).

The dehumanizing behaviors documented in the Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo et al., 2000) and the Milgram Obedience Study (Milgram, 1973) reflect how ordinary individuals who are legally authorized to monitor and guard prisoners will inflict dehumanizing treatment on prisoners. Correction officers who are deindividualized while working in the prison system, and military soldiers in combat are easily moved to exert extreme abuses of power and commit heinous torture on innocent human beings (Zimbardo, 2007). These behaviors are demonstrated in the U.S. Prison System (Butterfield, 2004; Liebling, 2011), and documented in reports of abuse in the Abu Ghraib Military Prison in Bahdad, Iraq and United States immigrant detention centers (Brown, 2005; Dávila-Ruhaak, Schwinn, & Chan, 2014; Hersh, 2004). The sadistic and inhumane torture that was inflicted on the detainees at Abu Ghraib left serious psychological scars on the detainees and exposed the dark side of American values and the joy individuals in the U.S. Military appeared to experience by torturing human beings under the guise of patriotism (Brown, 2005). The results of these studies show how the impact of the prison environment can influence the development of psychological effects in prisoners as well as individuals who work within the prison (Tomar, 2013).

Psychological Effects of Incarceration

Prisonization and incarceration can be an intense traumatic experience. The psychological effects that can develop from incarceration are numerous and vary depending on the individual (Haney, 2012). An individual's vulnerability to the effects of stress and trauma, as theorized in McCann and Pearlman's (1990) CSDT, may determine whether or not an individual will develop psychological issues (Haney, 2012). Debates on the psychological effects vary and are dependent on the validity of the conducted studies (Haney, 2012). In addition, some effects are exclusive to men, to women, to juveniles, and can also affect inmates who serve short jail terms (DeVeaux, 2013). A number of the psychological difficulties experienced by formerly incarcerated individuals are the same difficulties experienced by war veterans, with some effects exclusive to individuals who are involuntarily confined (Liem, & Kundst, 2013). Adverse psychological issues are especially debilitating for those who were imprisoned as a result of wrongful conviction (Grounds, 2004). Individuals released from prison without the proper treatment to deal with their trauma are more likely to recycle the process of re-offending and returning to prison repeatedly without ever being treated (Courtney, & Maschi, 2013). Courtney and Maschi (2013) posit that untreated trauma may result in mental health issues and recidivism in formerly incarcerated individuals.

Within the past 10 years, the rate of incarcerated women with mental health issues has increased more than 31% (Lynch, et. el, 2014). PTSD has been identified as the most common psychological disorder among incarcerated women, followed by major depressive disorder, and psychotic disorders (Lynch, et. el, 2014).

Individuals who are incarcerated as juveniles and grow up within the prison may suffer the most psychologically, due to the extreme trauma they are subjected to while incarcerated (Lambie & Randell, 2013). The psychological effects on juveniles are far more devastating and difficult to treat than individuals who are traumatized as adults Lambie & Randell, 2013). The psychosocial development of juveniles is completely disrupted, which results in adults who are unable to make effective and informed decisions on their own and who often lack the ability to control their impulsive and aggressive behavior (Dimitrieva, Monahan, Caufman, & Steinberg, 2012). Juveniles who grow up while incarcerated are usually not able to view anything from more than one vantage point, nor are they able to take responsibility for any of their actions (Dimitrieva et al., 2012; Lambie & Randell, 2013). Their social development is hindered and they develop a distorted and unrealistic impression of the world outside of prison (Dimitrieva et al., 2012; Lambie & Randell, 2013). The most common effects that can result from the adaptations to prison life include personality changes, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, dependence on the institution's structural mechanisms, over-control of emotions, social withdrawal and isolation, hypervigilence, interpersonal mistrust and suspicion, lack of self-worth, incorporating the unwritten and informal inmate culture and code, a diminished sense of self, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS), depression, (Armour, 2012; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015; Wolff, Huening, Shi, & Frueh, 2014). Personality changes can result from exposure to a severely traumatic event (Armour, 2012). Individuals can become withdrawn, self-isolating, and antisocial (Schnittker, & Massoglia, 2015). Personality changes are

classified in the ICD-10 in the category of enduring personality change after a catastrophic experience (World Health Organization, 1992).

PTSD and PTSS may be considered the most common and most serious of the psychological effects that may develop as a result of incarceration (Armour, 2012). An example of symptoms of PTSD and PTSS that may result from incarceration are institutionalized personality traits (i.e., emotional instability, introversion, feelings of inferiority, submission, social dependence, and unsociability), panic disorders, paranoid symptoms, alcohol and drug dependence, depression, sleep disorders, mood disorders and irritability, and difficulty interacting socially with others (Buckstel, & Kilmann, 1980; Haney, 2001; Haney, 2012; Hagan et.al.; Horsch, 1938; Liem, & Kunst, 2013).

Trauma, Executive Functioning, and Working Memory

An area of psychological effects related to incarceration that is not explored in most research is executive functioning and working memory (Meijers, Harte, Jonker, & Meynen, 2015). This is an important area that needs to be extensively explored since executive functions include the ability to think rationally before acting and resisting temptations (Diamond, 2013). Research conducted by Meijers et al. (2015) posits that without executive functioning, formerly incarcerated individuals will have difficulty making goals that will support their survival efforts postincarceration. Langer, (1991) notes that there are studies that document the harmful effects of reoccurring memories created from traumatic events. Meijers et al. (2015) conducted a study that examined the executive functioning of incarcerated individuals to determine if self-regulation and working memory in any way influenced recidivism. Results of their study concluded that

the working memory of both violent and non-violent incarcerated offenders was

significantly worse than those tested in the control group (Meijers et al, 2015). The

results of this study are significant in that it confirms the effects of trauma on executive

functioning, and specifically the working memory of incarcerated individuals (Meijers et

al., 2015). Executive functions include the ability to think rationally before acting, facing

unanticipated challenges, resisting temptations, and staying focused (Diamond, 2013).

The core functions reported to be negatively affected as a result of the trauma

experienced during incarceration include: inhibition i.e., the ability to resist temptation

and acting impulsively, working memory, the ability to see things from more than one

perspective, and the ability to quickly and flexibly adapt to different circumstances

(Diamond, 2013). Meijers et al. (2013) posit that executive functioning is necessary for

formerly incarcerated individuals to survive postincarceration, and that with their

executive functioning impaired, some formerly incarcerated individuals experience

difficulty in developing the goal planning ability necessary for finding housing and

employment postincarceration, thus increasing their risk for recidivism.

Summary and Conclusion

The research in this literature review documents the psychological issues that may

develop in individuals as a result of prisonization, the process of adaptation to prison

culture, and incarceration, and how those psychological effects may adversely affect re-

entry to society and contribute to the high rates of recidivism. Qualitative studies by

Binswanger, Nowels, Corsi, Long, Booth, Kutner, and Steiner (2011), Liem and Kundst,

(2013); Wolff et al. (2014); Yang et al. (2009) are a number of the studies that document

the psychological effects of incarceration that was used in this literature review, however, the study by Liem and Kundst, (2013) is one of the few studies that explored the prison experience from the perspective of individuals who actually lived the experience. Many of the existing qualitative studies that explored the psychological effects of incarceration used questionnaires and rarely conducted face to face interviews of individuals while they were incarcerated due to the protected status of inmates (Liem & Kunst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014). This study will contribute to the existing literature on prisonization and incarceration by exploring prisonization and incarceration from the retrospective perspective of individuals who lived the experience.

Prisonization or adaptation to prison culture is different for each individual and not all individuals who experience incarceration will develop negative psychological effects (Haney, 2012). How an individual adapts to prison culture may contribute to the development of psychological issues (Haney, 2012; Souza & Dhami, 2010). Constructivist self-development theory (CSDT), which combines the psychoanalytic theories of social learning theory and cognitive development theory (McCann & Pearlman, 1990), is the framework that was used to explore how individuals described adaptation to prison culture.

Examining the psychological effects of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who actually experienced incarceration is a study that is long overdue (see Schnittiker, 2014). With the increasing number of individuals who are being released from prison every day and unable to adjust and cope with life outside of prison, treatments and programs geared to treating the psychological effects that hinder

postincarceration adjustment need to be developed (Haney, 2001; Lynch, 2012). It may be believed by some that prison makes people hard and tough, however, it is hoped that this literature review has provided evidence that prison may psychologically weaken some individuals (Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014).

Individuals who actually lived and are still living the prison experience can best explain the debilitating effects of incarceration and postincarceration (see Schittker, 2014). I used a hermeneutic phenomenological study to fill the gap in the literature regarding the incarceration experience from the perspective of individuals who actually lived the experience (see Larkin & Thompson, 2003; Larkin et.al., 2006; Laverty, 2008). The methodology, research design, and role of this researcher is explained in detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the existing literature regarding the potential psychological effects of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who lived the experience of incarceration. In this study, I examined the potential psychological effects that formerly incarcerated individuals may have developed as a result of incarceration. In this chapter, I describe the research process, including an explanation of Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology (Groenwald, 2004; Husserl, 1970), the qualitative research design of phenomenological research, and the rationale for choosing this research methodology. This chapter also includes explanations of the history and the value of qualitative phenomenological studies, the population that was studied including how the participants were chosen, methods of interviewing, collection of the data, and the materials that were used for collecting the data. Also included in this chapter are explanations of the coding and categorizing of the data, the transcription process, the validity of the gathered information, and the efforts to assure the legal and ethical compliance of this study.

Research Design and Rationale

I used a qualitative design (Cresswell, 2009, 2013; Patton, 2005) to conduct this study. A qualitative design allows for a phenomenon to be studied in its natural setting (Patton, 2005). Prisonization and the psychological effects of incarceration were best explored by gaining the perspective of those individuals who experienced the phenomenon of incarceration (Cresswell, 2009; Patton, 2005).

In an effort to gain a better understanding of what formerly incarcerated individuals experienced while incarcerated and during their postincarceration adjustment, I developed open-ended questions with the intention of yielding as much detail as possible in the exact words of the individuals who experienced being incarcerated (Creswell, 2013). The research questions were:

1. How do formerly incarcerated individuals describe their psychological health prior to their first incarceration experience?

2. How does a self-selected small number of former prisoners describe their first prison experience?

3. What, if any, are the potential psychological effects of the prison experience as described by former inmates?

4. How do formerly incarcerated individuals describe their postprison adjustment?

A phenomenon is described as any finite and definable thing that is experienced. The experience can be of an individual or groups of individuals (Laureate, 2013). The central phenomenon of this study was how the participants experienced incarceration, which is described as a punitive form of consequences for breaking the law (Lynch, 2012) and consists of the legal confining of individuals convicted of a crime (Mears, Cochran, & Cullen, 2015). Incarceration is a definable experience and the focus of this study was on how the incarceration experience may have influenced the development of psychological issues in some of the incarcerated individuals who were studied (Hagan et.al; Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014). The best way to fully understand the

incarceration experience and any development of psychological issues that may result from incarceration is to explore the experience from the perspective of individuals who experienced it (see Creswell, 2013).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology as the Qualitative Method

A hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative design method was used in this study. Phenomenology is based on the philosophical movement founded by Husserl (Moran, 2001), which is used to explain that objects and events can only be understood in the way the human consciousness perceives them, and that an object or event cannot be fully understood if it has not been experienced (Husserl, 1970). The purpose of a phenomenological study is to provide a description and understanding of the "universal essence" or the nature of a phenomenon (Husserl, 2012; van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology is used to describe a phenomenon as it is experienced and understood, without preconceptions or theoretical orientations that attempt to explain the phenomenon (Kafle, 2013). Heidegger, a student of Husserl, further expanded phenomenology as a research method by developing an interpretative approach to phenomenology called hermeneutics (Giorgi, 2007; Heidegger, 2008).

The two approaches to phenomenological research are Husserl's (1970) empirical transcendental, which is focused on the accurate description of a phenomenon, and Heidegger's (2008) hermeneutics, which is more interested in the interpretation and the understanding of the purpose of a phenomenon (Giorgi, 2007; Heidegger, 2008; Patton, 2005). Both the transcendental and the hermeneutic approaches rely on the lived experience for the description and interpretation of a phenomenon (Giorgi, 2007). The

hermeneutic phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because I wanted to explore the incarceration experience as it was lived, interpreted, and understood by those who lived the experience (Heidegger, 2008; Kafle, 2013; Laverty, 2003). This approach allowed me to explore the lived experience of incarceration from a first-person perspective and then explain the participants' descriptions and interpretations of what their incarceration experience was like as well as the participants' understanding of the essence or the meaning of their incarceration experience (Heidegger, 2008; Laverty, 2003). The interview questions that were used in this study (see Appendix C) were open-ended and were designed to encourage participants to freely express their experiences in their own words. The questions also allowed me to probe for a deeper or more detailed understanding of a participant's response.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this study was to gather and organize the data, analyze the data, as well as interpret the data (see Larkin & Thompson, 2003; see Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997). In interpreting the data, my focus was on the meaning of an experience and what made it significant to the participant who experienced it rather than the event itself and its causes (Larkin & Thompson, 2003). I wanted to know how formerly incarcerated participants adapted to their incarceration experience by understanding how individuals interpreted their incarceration experience as opposed to what meaning society might ascribe to the prison experience (Larkin & Thompson, 2003). Once I understood how the participants adapted to their experience, I was better able to better understand the factors and influences that may have contributed to the

development of psychological issues in the participants. The CSDT (Saakvitne, Tennen, & Affleck, 1998) was used as the framework to explore the potential development of psychological issues of formerly incarcerated individuals. The data that was collected was the participants' responses to the open-ended interview questions (see Appendix C), which were created to obtain as much detailed information as possible about the phenomenon of incarceration from the perspective of the individuals who experienced it. I interpreted the data through the lens of the CSDT and relayed the experiences of the participants in a way that captured the meaning and understanding of how the participants adapted to incarceration by the way they interpreted their lived experience of incarceration (Larkin & Thompson, 2003) and any development of psychological issues. My intent for conducting this study was exploratory in the sense of just looking at what may emerge. This required open-ended interview questions. It also required an understanding that in order for me to engage in the experience of the formerly incarcerated, I needed to be able to identify with the participants and reflect on my own experiences and assumptions when needed (see Larkin & Thompson, 2003).

During the interviewing of each participant I made notes in a journal of my perceptions, observations, and reactions to better interpret how each participant understood the essence or the core meaning of their prisonization and incarceration experience. I was not involved in any supervisory-subordinate situation with any of the participants. I did not instruct the participants in any way and I did not have any power over the participants.

I acknowledge a bias that is based on my experiences as a NYC probation officer, NYS parole officer, and a program specialist in the mental health ward of a state maximum security prison. I believe that some formerly incarcerated persons do experience psychological issues that originate during their incarceration. I did not lead the participants with regard to their responses about their incarceration, as evidenced by the open-ended questions I asked (see Appendix C). I also did not press the participants to answer questions that they were uncomfortable answering. I did not divulge any participant responses, personal knowledge of any other participants, or information regarding the potential psychological effects of incarceration with the participants who were interviewed for this study.

Every effort was made to assure that no ethical issues were violated during this study. I have not ever been professionally or personally involved with any of the participants in the study. The participants of this study were not housed or residing in any institutionalized settings that require special access, nor did this study review any data that required authorized access or special permission to review.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The participant population consisted of individuals who were formerly incarcerated and were no longer on state or federal parole. Efforts were made to assure that the participants were not currently on paroled status from a correctional facility in the United States. This information was verified through the state Department of Corrections websites within the United States. All paroled individuals are listed on the state

Department of Correction websites as currently being on parole, the date of their parole

release, and the prison they were released from. Picture identification was asked of the

participants for purposes of identification. Efforts were made to assure that participants

from varying races, gender, age groups, and incarceration time lengths were interviewed.

It is hoped that the varying factors of the individuals interviewed will provide a view of

the incarceration experience from different perspectives based on their varied

demographics.

The number of individuals needed to explore a phenomenon can vary in size from

a minimum of three individuals to a maximum of 15 individuals (Creswell, 2013). Ten

individuals over the age of 18 were interviewed for this study. The rationale for this

number is that at least one individual from each identified demographic category would

be represented in the study (e.g., African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian male and

female, one participant who entered prison as a juvenile and was released as an adult, a

participant who spent more than 15 years in prison, and a participant who spent 2.5 years

in prison). The sample size of 10 was decided as a fair number that represented the main

demographics that may influence adaptation to incarceration. There are other identifying

factors that may influence how individuals adapt to incarceration such as education and

economic status.

Participants were recruited based on their response to a flyer (see Appendix A)

that was posted at Fortune Society in Long Island City, NY—a well-known reentry

agency that provided services to the formerly incarcerated and their families—the

Brooklyn and New York Public Libraries, and various public libraries throughout Nassau

and Suffolk Counties. The flyer included a request for participants in a study that would focus on their incarceration experience and indicated that participation was voluntary. The flyer included information on how to contact the researcher. Participants who responded to the flyer were given a written questionnaire containing questions on demographics (e.g., age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, occupation, living situation, dates of incarceration, age at first incarceration, and number of times incarcerated) and were selected based on their responses (see Appendix B). During the interview, each participant was asked the same demographic questions and the same open-ended questions regarding incarceration experience and postincarceration experience.

Instrumentation

I developed a series of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix C) that were created to yield as much information as possible regarding the incarceration experience of the participants. The use of the conversational interview allowed the participants to express themselves and made it possible for me to ask for elaborations on anything that needed further clarification (see Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The informal interview resulted in different responses from each participant of the study (Patton, 2005). The open-ended questions were:

1. What was it like when you were incarcerated?

2. What challenges, if any, did you experience during your incarceration?

3. How would you describe your mental health prior to your incarceration?

4. How would you describe your mental health during your incarceration?

5. How would you describe your mental health postincarceration?

6. What was it like when you were released from prison back into society?

7. What challenges, if any, did you experience when you were released from prison back into society?

8. What else, if anything, would you like to say about your incarceration experience?

The only other instruments that were used to collect data included a Sony hand held voice recorder, the recorder on a Samsung Galaxy S7 Edge cell phone with a 256-gig SD chip to store the recordings, a notebook and a pen. Content validity was established by transcribing the audio recordings word for word and having the respondents review and sign their transcribed interview either electronically or in person to ensure validity.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The interviews were conducted at the Wyandanch Community Resource Center in Wyandanch, NY, a location that was convenient for all participants. I introduced myself to each participant and proceeded to an empty office. The only items that were on the table were my notebook, voice recorder, and phone, and the Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix B) for that participant being interviewed. In an effort to establish trust with the participants, I explained my background, the study, and my interest in exploring their incarceration experience. I also expressed the importance of my study in bringing awareness of the difficulties of postincarceration. I felt it was important for the participants to know the importance of their experiences, thoughts, ideas, and meanings in contributing to a better understanding of the postincarceration experience. The

participants were given an informed consent agreement that was developed by me for this study. All participants were in agreement with the contents of the informed consent agreement and signed the informed consent agreement. I conducted and recorded the interviews during the initial interview. All participants consented to the recording of the interview. The interviews took approximately one and a half hours and were recorded on a Sony hand held digital voice recorder that includes software that enables the recorded interviews to be transferred to a computer for transcription, a Samsung Galaxy S7 Edge cell phone with a 256-gig mini SD chip for storage, and a pen and paper. The cell phone, the pen, and paper were used as a backup in the event of a malfunction with the digital voice recorder. No software was used to analyze the interviews. Each participant was assigned a letter code and the date they were interviewed was noted. Each recorded interview was saved in a separate file on the SD chip. Field notes were made immediately after each interview in order to reflect initial impressions, maintain the clarity of the collected data, and to motivate the analytical process (see Miner-Romanoff, 2012). My field notes included my reflections of the interviews, nonverbal impressions, observations, and any information that was added to the transcripts to be summarized, coded, and included in the analysis (see Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

The gathered data was collected from the demographics questionnaire, transcripts of the ten interviews between the researcher and selected participants, and any field notes taken by the researcher. Field notes contained the researcher's observations, comments made by the participants before and after the interviews, the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and emotional reactions experienced during and post interviews. All interviews

were digitally recorded, transcribed, reviewed, analyzed, coded (see Data Analysis Plan below), and interpreted by the researcher. Participants agreed (in their informed consent form) to be contacted by telephone if further information was needed.

All gathered data was treated as confidential. No anonymous or archived data was collected. Confidential data was stored on a flash drive and is kept under lock and key at the researcher's home. The researcher is the only person who has access to the data. The transcribed audio data, the participants reviewed and approved interview data, and the audio flash drives are stored under lock and key at the researcher's home for five years. Transcribed pages will be shredded after five years. If more participants were needed to complete the study, participants would have been recruited from the lists of individuals who expressed an interest to participate in this study. Participants were informed that after the completion of the analysis of the data, the findings of the study will be shared with them. I thanked the participants for participating in my study and allowing me to explore their incarceration experience.

Participants exited the study with the contact information for the Better Living Center at Fortune Society where they can receive free mental health assistance that may be able to assist them in their postincarceration adjustment if further assistance is needed. Jessica Glass, the Director of the Better Living Center and Daniel Sennett, the Director of Public Relations, was notified of this study and informed of the possibility of referring clients to Fortune Society if needed. The Fortune Society website states that they take walk-ins and provides services for anyone who has a history of incarceration. Fortune Society will refer clients to other health agencies if needed, and they will assist all

referrals with obtaining medical insurance as needed. They will also provide substance abuse treatment, employment and education services.

There were no published data collections instruments used in this study, nor were there any researcher-developed instruments used in this study. Consequently, no pilot studies were necessary.

Data Analysis Plan

The data that was collected was directly related to the research questions regarding the potential psychological effects of incarceration (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012). Analysis of the data was based on Groenewald's (2004) simplified five-step version of Hycner's (1985) original 15-step explicitation process of analyzing data from interviews. According to Groenewald (2004), Hycner preferred the term "explicitation" as opposed to the term "data analysis" because the term analysis indicates breaking the whole into parts resulting in the loss of the meaning of the phenomena as a whole. Groenewald (2004) further explained that "explicitation" is the process of examining all components of a phenomenon as a whole. The five phases of the simplified explicitation process as described by Groenewald (2004) are:

1). Bracketing and phenomenological reduction.

2). Delineating units of meaning.

3). Clustering of units of meaning to form themes.

4). Summarizing each interview, validating it and making modifications where necessary.

5). Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and forming

a composite summary.

Because of the extravagant expense of coding software, all coding for this study was done by hand. In support of this position, Minor-Romanoff (2012) posits that manually analyzing data is more effective when using techniques that provide systemic processes. Groenewald (2004) concurred adding that analyzing data using a systemic process allows the researcher to respond to the data mentally, emotionally, and intuitively.

In the first phase of the explicitation process, bracketing and phenomenological reductions, the recorded data was transcribed and transferred onto a Microsoft Word document using Transcribe online dictation software. Transcripts were compared with the audio recordings to verify accuracy of the transcriptions. Once the recordings were transcribed, a copy of the participant's transcript was emailed to the participant and a telephone conference was scheduled to go over the transcript to verify its accuracy. At that time, corrections, additions, and deletions were made accordingly. Copies of the adjusted transcripts were emailed to the participant. Since all participants had access to a computer, a second face-to-face review was not needed. Once all the transcripts were verified, I began the process of bracketing and phenomenological reduction (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). This process entailed listening to the audios and reading the transcripts for the meaning of the speaker as opposed to my attribution of meaning based on my own experiences, biases, and perceptions (Hycner, 1985). I was open to whatever

meanings the participant relayed with regard to their incarceration experience as they lived it (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985).

In the second phase of the explicitation process, delineating units of meaning, I listened to each recording over and over again while looking at my field notes for any non-verbal signs and noted and listed the relevant themes that presented in each interview (Groenewald, 2004). I tried to stay as close to the literal words and phrases as possible without interjecting my own interpretations. No overlapping themes were discarded, and I made note of the number of times a theme was mentioned (Groenewald, 2004).

In the third phase of the explicitation process, clustering of units of meaning to form themes, I again bracketed all assumptions, interpretations, and biases, and clumped together common themes in an effort to interpret the essence of the meanings the participant expressed regarding his or her incarceration experience (Groenewald, 2004).

In the fifth and final phase of the explicitation process, extracting themes from all the interviews and developing a composite summary, I reviewed the themes from all the interviews and made note of any significant differences (Growenewald, 2004). I wrote a summary that reflected the common meaning that emerged from all the gathered themes, extracting the essence of each participant's incarceration experience, and noting any psychological impacts that resulted from the incarceration experience.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To insure the credibility of this study, several procedures noted by Creswell (2009) were used to validate the quality of the data. The strategies used to insure the

credibility of the data collected are triangulation, which is the corroboration of themes

between prospective participants (Patton, 2005); member checking, which involved going

back to participants to have them verify the accuracy of the data; and peer review, which

is the review of data on the subject matter from several sources who are familiar with the

psychological effects of incarceration (Creswell, 2009).

Transferability

The focus of this study is on the psychological effects of incarceration. The

details of the incarceration experience, for the most part, are typical for individuals who

have been incarcerated. The findings of this study cannot readily be applied to

individuals who have not experienced incarceration. Descriptions of the incarceration

experience and the potential effects are used to relay the incarceration experience, as

experienced by this specific population (Creswell, 2009).

Dependability

The strategy of triangulation was used to insure dependability and reliability in

this study (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Patton, 2005). Audio recordings of all interviews were

transcribed and reviewed by participants to authenticate the reliability of the collected

data.

Confirmability

Researcher bias can taint the findings and credibility of a study. Epoche is a step

in the process of phenomenological analysis (Patton, 2005). Epoch or bracketing refers

to abstaining from personal judgment and putting personal experience and biases aside in

order to understand a phenomenon from a different perspective (Creswell, 2013; Patton,

2005). A personal journal was used to reflect my personal thoughts and feelings regarding the participant responses during the interview. Literature that documents mental health issues in incarcerated populations (Haney, 2005, 2012, 2015; Liem & Kundst, 2013; Lynch, 2012) was used to compare my findings as a way to support the quality and reliability of the findings of this study. The audio recordings and transcription of the interviews, verified by the participants, was also used to confirm the reliability of the collected data.

Ethical Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University approved this study (01-31-17-0249894). All participants of this study were adult volunteers, 18 and older, who signed informed consent forms prior to being interviewed.

All participants in this study were treated with respect. There were no judgments by me regarding their criminal activity, their prison adjustment, or their coping mechanisms. Institutional permissions were not necessary as all participants had completed their paroled status or had maxed out of their state or federally imposed incarceration obligations and were no longer in the custody of any state or federal correctional institutional. Individuals who had pending litigation were not considered for participation in this study. If an adverse predictable situation had occurred during the course of this study, there were reasonable considerations in place to assure the participant's comfort, including ending the interview if necessary. A predictable situation may have been a participant emotionally breaking down while recalling a traumatic or painful experience. In that instance, I would have tried to comfort the

participant and possibly determine if the participant would benefit from outpatient counseling or therapy. I reviewed with each participant the free mental health resources for formerly incarcerated individuals offered by Fortune Society and I would have assisted the participant in setting up an appointment for counseling or possible therapy if needed. Another predictable situation could be a participant who exhibited extreme anger and expressed a plan to cause harm to another individual. In the event of potential harm to another individual, a Tarasoff reporting would be considered and initiated (Appelbaum & Rosenbaum, 1989).

There were no ethical concerns with regard to the recruitment of materials or ethical concerns as to how data was collected.

All data was recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Recordings and transcripts are confidential and are stored on a flash drive and kept in a locked safe at the residence of the researcher for five years. No one other than the researcher has access to the information stored on the flash drive. No archival data were used in this study. After five years of the completion of this study, all recordings will be deleted from the flash drive, and the researcher will shred all transcripts. There are no other ethical issues or concerns. Interviews were conducted at the Wyandanch Community Resource Center, Wyandanch, NY. There are no conflicts of interests, and no incentives were offered for participation in this study.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the methodological design of this study. I explained the hermeneutic, phenomenological methodology (Giorgi, 2007; Husserl, 2012; van

Manen, 1990) that was used for this study. I reviewed how the data was collected, managed, secured, and analyzed, and how the participants interviewed for this study were selected. I was extremely careful in assuring, as best I could, that the individuals I interviewed were not currently on parole and have no pending criminal charges. I was able to verify that a participant was not currently on parole by doing a name search on the New York State (NYS) Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DCCS) inmate information website (Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, 2016). I explained the central phenomenon of the incarceration experience and the rationale for choosing hermeneutic phenomenology (Giorgi, 2007) to examine the psychological effects of incarceration. I discussed issues of trustworthiness, ethical concerns, and the procedures that were used to conduct this study.

The main research question that guided this proposed study was: What are the potential psychological effects, if any, of the prison experience as described by former inmates? The chapters following the explanation of the methodology used for this study will fully explain the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore

prisonization and the potential psychological effects of incarceration. The research

questions were: (a) How do former prisoners describe their psychological health prior to

their first incarceration experience?, (b) How do former prisoners describe their first

prison experience?, (c) What are the psychological effects, if any, that former prisoners

describe experiencing?, (d) How do former prisoners describe their postprison

adjustment? In this chapter, I review the setting, demographics, data collection, data

analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and conclude with a summary.

Setting

There were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants

or their experience at the time of this study, or that may have influenced the interpretation

of the results of this study. To the best of my knowledge, all participants completed their

parole and did not have any open cases. No participants were subjected to conditions that

could have influenced their participation or the interpretation of the results of this study.

Demographics

All demographic information was obtained by completion of the participant

eligibility form (see Appendix B) and considered accurate by all participants. All

participants were residents of NYS when they were interviewed and had been

incarcerated in a NYS or United States federal prison.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Variables

Participant	Age	Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Education	Employment status	Age at first incarceration	Years incarcerated
A	42	M	Hispanic	GED	Unemployed	14	16
B	51	M	African American	GED	Disabled	13	15
C	53	M	African American	High School	Yes	34	17
D	45	F	African American	GED	Yes	12	5
E	52	F	African American	High School	Yes	42	2.5
F	53	F	Caucasian	BS	Yes	22	26
G	51	F	African American	High School	Yes	24	10
H	41	M	Caucasian	BA	Yes	17	17
I	37	M	African American	GED	Yes	18	6
J	57	M	African American	High School	Unemployed	19	34.5

The age range of the participants was between 31 and 57. Four males identified as African American, three females identified as African American, one male and one female identified as European American, and one male identified as Hispanic. One participant entered prison as a juvenile and was released as an adult, one entered and was released from prison as a juvenile, two participants spent at least 17 consecutive years in prison, and one participant spent 33 consecutive years in prison. The number of years incarcerated for several of the participants is cumulative, meaning they spent at least a minimum of 2 consecutive years in prison and more than one 2-consecutive-year-term in prison, including being imprisoned on parole violations. *Straight time* refers to the number of consecutive years incarcerated without interruption and is most often referred to by participants as a *bid*. To maintain confidentiality, a letter of the alphabet has replaced the names of the participants. Throughout the remainder of this study, I use the assigned letter when referring to participants.

Participant A

Participant A is a 42-year-old single, Hispanic male who has been incarcerated several times. He was first incarcerated as a juvenile at the age of 14 and spent 4 months in a juvenile facility. He was arrested at the age of 16, tried as an adult and sent to a local jail. He was rearrested again at 17 and entered an adult state correctional facility at the age of 18 and has served several less than 1-year sentences until 2009. Participant A has spent a total of 16 years incarcerated, with 3 ½ years straight time. He earned his GED while incarcerated. He is currently unemployed and is working on a pictorial documentary of his life comprised of the artwork he completed while in prison.

Participant B

Participant B is a 51-year-old widowed, African American male. He has been in and out of jail since the age of 13 and has spent a total of 16 years incarcerated. Participant B served 5 years straight time. Participant B earned his GED while incarcerated and is on disability. He spends much of his free time volunteering with a community youth organization.

Participant C

Participant C is a 53-year-old single, African American male. He was first incarcerated in federal prison at the age of 34. He was released after serving 17 years straight time. Participant C earned his high school diploma prior to being incarcerated and currently works at a bakery. In his spare time, he volunteers with a community youth organization.

Participant D

Participant D is a 45-year-old single, African American female with three children. She was incarcerated as a juvenile at the age of 12 and was moved around to several juvenile facilities until she maxed out her sentence at the age of 17. *Maxed out* is the term participants used to indicate the maximum expiration or completion of a sentence, which includes all parole time. All of her children were born before the age 19. Participant D earned her GED postincarceration and is currently working full-time with the United States Postal Service.

Participant E

Participant E is a 52-year-old single, African American female. She has one son who was an adult when the participant was first incarcerated at the age of 40. She violated probation and was rearrested at the age of 44. She served 2.5 years straight time and 2.5 years on work release. Participant E earned her high school diploma and currently owns two sober houses. The participant pays a mortgage on two homes and rents rooms to individuals upon their release from an inpatient drug treatment facility. The participant provides food and case management services for all residents in her sober houses. She also works as an intake case manager for the Council of Thought in Action.

Participant F

Participant F is a 53-year-old single, Caucasian female with one adult daughter. Her daughter was 1 year old when she was first incarcerated at the age of 22. She has been incarcerated several times and served 6 years straight time. Participant F earned her

high school diploma and is one semester away from completing her bachelor's degree in social work. She currently works as a waitress in a diner.

Participant G

Participant G is a 51-year-old single, African American female with five children. She was first incarcerated at the age of 22 and has been incarcerated several times on new arrests and parole violations. During a 7-day furlough, participant violated her parole and was on the run during her entire pregnancy. Participant G's child was born with cerebral palsy. She began serving a 6- to 12-year sentence less than 90 days after the birth of her disabled child. Participant G served 8 years straight time and earned her GED, associate's degree, and her Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor certification during her incarceration.

Participant H

Participant H is a 42-year-old married, Caucasian male. He was first incarcerated at the age of 17 and was released to parole after serving 17.5 years straight time in state prisons. Participant H earned his GED while incarcerated and completed his bachelor's degree in Human Services while on parole. Participant H is currently employed as the director of a Health Outreach Service with a local county agency.

Participant I

Participant I is a 37-year-old single, African American male who was first incarcerated at the age of 18. Participant I served several less than 1-year sentences in county jails before serving 6 years straight time in NYS prisons. Participant I served a

total of 10 years incarcerated and earned his GED while incarcerated. He is currently

employed with a transportation company.

Participant J

Participant J is a 57-year-old married, African American male, who served 34.5

years straight time in state prisons. He is a high school graduate and was first

incarcerated at the age of 22. During his incarceration, Participant J developed and

facilitated victim impact programs and is currently developing a victim impact program

for the formerly incarcerated. Participant J spends his time counseling formerly

incarcerated men who are having difficulties with their postincarceration adjustment.

Data Collection

Walden University's IRB approved my data collection procedure in February,

2017 (01-31-17-0249894). The collection of data for this study consisted of interviews

with 10 formerly incarcerated individuals over the age of 18, who are no longer on parole

in the United States, using open-ended questions. This format ensured that participants

were free to interpret their incarceration experience as they experienced it and in their

own words. Allowing participants to relay their experiences in their own words ensured

that a clear description and understanding of the participants' interpretations of the

phenomenon of incarceration was captured (Heidegger, 2008; Laverty, 2003). The

interview questions evolved around the description and challenges experienced during

and postincarceration, and a description of the participants' mental health, before, during,

and postincarceration. All participants were determined eligible to participate by

checking Department of Corrections public records to verify completion of their

sentence.

All interviews were conducted at the Wyandanch Community Resource Center in

Wyandanch, NY from March 28, 2017 through May 19, 2017. This location was familiar

and conveniently accessible for all participants and has a reputation of being offender

friendly. Each participant was interviewed once in person, and all follow-up interviews

were conducted by telephone. Each face-to-face interview averaged approximately one

to one and a half hours. The shortest interview was 57 minutes, and the longest interview

lasted a little more than one and a half hours. Gratitude was expressed to each participant

for his or her participation. To establish a comfortable relationship with the participants,

I explained my background as a former New York City probation officer, NYS parole

officer, and program specialist in the mental health ward of a state maximum security

prison. I explained my interest in conducting this study and the importance of hearing

formerly incarcerated individuals relay their personal experience in their own words. I

also explained that my purpose for conducting this study was to bring to awareness the

potential psychological experiences of individuals who were formerly incarcerated. I told

each participant the interview was confidential and would be recorded on a Samsung

Galaxy cell phone and a Sony digital recorder. All recording devices were in plain view.

Contents of the consent form were explained to each participant. I informed all

participants that there was no compensation for participating in the study and their

participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were asked if they understood everything

that was explained to them and if they had any questions. I told each participant they

would receive a copy of the transcript for their review and approval, and a copy of the results of the study. Participants were informed that they could end the interview at any time and did not have to disclose anything that was uncomfortable for them. Each participant reviewed and signed the consent form and was given a copy of the signed consent form with both of our signatures. Participants were asked eight open-ended interview questions:

1. What was it like when you were incarcerated?

2. What challenges, if any, did you experience during your incarceration?

3. How would you describe your mental health prior to your incarceration?

4. How would you describe your mental health during your incarceration?

5. How would you describe your mental health postincarceration?

6. What was it like when you were released from prison back into society?

7. What challenges, if any, did you experience when you were released from prison back into society?

8. What else, if anything, would you like to say about your incarceration experience?

Further questions to prompt elaboration were asked about any unclear responses that needed clarification. For example, if participants responded that their incarceration experience was "scary" or "brutal," they were asked if they felt comfortable enough to go into detail about what they meant by scary or brutal.

I explained to all participants that if they needed to speak with anyone any time after the interview, Fortune Society, an organization that provides free counseling

services for formerly incarcerated individuals, was available by appointment or walk in.

Fortune society gave permission to refer any formerly incarcerated individuals if they

were in need of mental health services. All participants were given the contact

information for Fortune Society in the event mental health services might be needed any

time after the interview. Most participants were currently in counseling and did not need

the services of Fortune Society. All interviews were recorded on a Sony hand held digital

voice recorder that included software that enabled recorded interviews to be transferred to

a computer for transcription, a Samsung Galaxy S7 Edge cell phone with a 256-gig mini

SD chip for storage, and a pen and paper. I recorded observation notes and thoughts in a

notebook. I transcribed each interview, sent copies of the respective interviews to each

participant, and verified via telephone with each participant the accuracy and validity of

the transcript. Participants either e-mailed or sent a text message verifying that they read

the transcript and were satisfied with the accuracy of the transcript. No participant added

or changed anything on the original transcript. Follow-up interviews were conducted via

telephone after the interviews were transcribed and averaged approximately thirty

minutes or less. The purpose of the follow-up interview was to clarify anything that was

not clear during the initial interview and to verify that participants did not have any

questions or wanted to change or add anything to their original interview. Follow-up

interviews were not recorded.

The variations from the data collection plans presented in Chapter 3, included the

added IRB approved strategies of contacting Beverly Theodore, Director of the

Wyandanch Resource Center; Health Broughton, Director of Man in the Mirror

Community and Youth Outreach; personally recruiting participants I met at the Suffolk County Reentry Task Force Resource Fair; and snowballing. The snowball technique entails asking one participant to recommend others to be interviewed (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). Other variations from the data collection plan presented in Chapter 3 included not requiring participants to electronically sign their signature verifying the accuracy and validity of the transcript, and not scheduling a second face-to face interview. All follow-up interviews were conducted via telephone.

The original data collection plan included the posting of flyers at Fortune Society in Long Island City, NY; posting a flyer on the Prison Talk website; and posting flyers at the Suffolk County Reentry Task Force in Suffolk County, NY. Fortune Society required that I come in for an interview and participate in their 2-hour training on "how to talk to the formerly incarcerated" before they would post my flyers. I informed Fortune Society of my experience as a NYC probation officer, NYS parole officer, and a program specialist in the mental health unit of a state maximum-security prison. Fortune Society required that I still come in for an interview and training before they would post my flyer. I made an appointment to be interviewed and participate in their training and made every effort to comply with their requests; however, complications arose on the way to their office, leading to no flyers being posted at Fortune Society. There were no responses to the posting on the Prison Talk website.

I submitted a request for Change in Procedures to IRB to use alternative methods for recruitment and was given the approval to reach out to personal contacts—Beverly Theodore, Director of the Wyandanch Resource Center, and Heath Broughton, Director

of Man in the Mirror Community and Youth Outreach. I was able to recruit all participants by personally frequenting the Wyandanch Resource Center, in Wyandanch, NY, and speaking to individuals who were there receiving job services, by attending a Resource Fair sponsored by Edith Thomas, Director of the Suffolk County Reentry Task Force, and by speaking with formerly incarcerated individuals who volunteer with Heath Broughton, Director of Man in the Mirror Community and Youth Outreach. No unusual circumstances were encountered during the data collection process. Four participants were recruited by snowballing.

Data Analysis

The collected data are the responses of each participant to questions directly related to the research questions regarding the potential psychological effects of incarceration. I used the five-step explicitation process of analyzing the data, which is based on Groenewald's (2004) simplified five-step version of Hycner's (1985) original 15-step explicitation process of analyzing data from interviews.

In the first phase of the explicitation process, I transcribed each interview and then compared the transcript with the audio recording of the interview to verify the accuracy of the transcript.

In the second phase of the explicitation process, I listened again to each recording, this time reviewing my notes for the non-verbal clues I observed and noted in my journal. I also listened for cues that indicated changes in tone, mood, and emotions. I highlighted and color-coded relevant codes that presented in each interview (Groenewald, 2004). I stayed as close as possible to the literal words that were

expressed, and I did not interject my interpretations. The specific codes identified in each transcript are:

1. Behaviors and State of Mind: This code identified specific acts, and the general conditions experienced that resulted in the specific behaviors. Example: "The most important focus from my first day of incarceration was survival; once I assessed the situation, my mind shifted to survival mode, beast mode."

2. Strategies and Coping Skills: This code refers to tactics that were used to respond and cope with spontaneous and planned events. Examples: "One time I heard that someone was talking about me and to keep from being labeled a punk and being messed with, I had to confront the person who was talking about me immediately. That established my reputation of being a no-nonsense guy so people would leave me alone." "I had to come down hard to let people know what they would have to deal with if they messed with me." "I had to pretend to be schizophrenic to beat a case."

3. Meanings and Concepts: This code refers to interpretations of how participants try to understand the phenomena of incarceration and their significance. Examples: "When you first enter prison, you are prey and considered new meat. "Thorazine is liquid handcuffs." "The difference between how long termers and short termers refer to their incarceration is that long termers describe the institution as the penitentiary and short timers refer to it as prison," and "a prisoner is a person who describes being kept against his will, and an inmate is someone who is willing to cooperate with the establishment and just going through the motions." "Most people refer to prison when they are captive, and just being held, and they are trying to get out.

"The penitentiary is an educational place where you are being held, but if you take the opportunity, you can study and make yourself better, it's an arc of higher learning."

"Gate monsters are on the gate screaming and hollering all day and night."

4. Conditions: This code refers to anything identified as contributing to the psychological effects of incarceration. Examples: "The only thing that bothered me about my incarceration was not being able to come and go whenever I wanted." "Because of the different gangs and the constant threat of violence in the Feds, I never got a good night sleep. Everyone slept with one eye open every night."

5. Relationships: This code refers to family and friends prior to incarceration, and those friendships developed during incarceration. Examples: "I met, married, and divorced my first wife in prison. I met her when I was 22 and I was divorced her when I was 24." "I tried to marry another inmate in prison and was denied, they was not having that." "I had five children and they lived with my mother while I was inside."

6. Reflexive - my role in probing certain responses. Example: A participant recounted an incident where he was handcuffed and shackled in a hospital emergency room while getting 52 stitches in his face and having his ear reattached when a correction officer whispered a derogatory comment in his hanging ear about karma. I asked the participant, "how did that affect you when that happened?"

In the third phase of the explicitation process, I clustered units of meaning, or codes to form themes. The specific themes that were identified were:

1. Trauma and family issues prior to incarceration - all participants disclosed family issues that they felt directly contributed to their incarceration. Issues included

severe sexual abuse, severe illness of a parent and neglect, death of a parent at a young age, an alcoholic parent, a parent addicted to drugs, physical abuse by a parent, abandonment by the father, and a strict home environment that was enforced by a parent who was not his biological father.

2. Jail prior and adaptation – some participants spent time in a local jail at least once prior to being incarcerated in a state penitentiary. In spite of their jail experience, no one was prepared for the actual incarceration experience, nor did their jail experience prevent him or her from developing psychological issues during their adaptation to incarceration.

3. Fear during and postincarceration - most participants described being in total fear the first time they entered the prison, even those who had been in local jails prior to prison. Participants described prison as being worse than they imagined. Many had doubts that they would survive their sentence. Participants explained that they were always aware of what they were doing to ensure that they did not do anything that would result in their returning to prison. Participants complained of not being able to mentally relax because of that constant fear of returning to prison.

4. Verbal and physical abuse by prison guards - most participants described issues with prison guards. Participants described being subjected to racism and discrimination by the prison guards and submitting to the adverse behavior of the prison guards to avoid being beat down.

5. Prison persona and survival - most participants described developing a prison persona as a survival mechanism. Most participants developed "tough guy" personas and

performed extreme acts of violence to establish their tough guy persona to discourage altercations. Participants reported carrying weapons to protect themselves.

6. Postincarceration habits and behaviors developed during incarceration – participants reported wearing boots and boxers in the shower, maintaining the prison regimen, showering and eating meals at specific times that correlate with prison time, noting count time, which are specific times during the day when all inmates are returned to their cells and counted to assure that all inmates are present, exhibiting their "tough guy" personas and being ready to fight with the least provocation. Participants reported that their spouses and family members were constantly reminding them that they are at home now, and no longer in prison.

7. Sexual identity issues - female participants described having to participate in lesbian relationships to avoid being raped, and for purposes of survival. Participants described having to change their appearance to appear more butch.

8. Emotions during and postincarceration – most participants expressed remorse, guilt, and regret for putting themselves in a position that resulted in their incarceration. Many experienced frustrations with trying to find a job and dealing with discrimination as a result of their incarceration. Some described feelings of helplessness, not being adequate, feeling like failures, and expressed frustrations at having to demonstrate their remorse and how they have changed.

9. Solitary confinement and coping strategies - many felt the need to do anything to keep from going crazy in solitary. Some paced the cell and counted steps, some read

and talked to the walls, pillows, and had conversations with themselves. Some did lucid dreaming and astral traveling to escape their environment.

10. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – developed as a result of witnessing daily violence and gruesome deaths of other inmates, and their own violent experiences. Reported symptoms were anxiety, depression, recurring memories, panic attacks, dissociative reactions, psychological distress, avoidance of external reminders of prison, and negative alterations, incognitions, and moods associated with traumatic events.

In the fourth phase of the explicitation process, I summarized and validated each interview. I summarized each theme in each interview and relayed them with the content of the entire interview to present each participant's experiences as he or she described experiencing them (Groenewald, 2004).

In the fifth phase of the explicitation process, I extracted all themes from the interviews and developed a composite summary and noted any significant differences. I developed a summary that reflected the common meanings that emerged from all the gathered themes, extracting the essence of each participant's incarceration experience, and noting any psychological issues the participants identified as believing were the results of their incarceration experience.

Discrepant Cases

There was one discrepant case identified in all of the interviews. A discrepant case can be described as a case where the collected data completely contradicts all other collected data regarding the phenomenon being studied (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The data collected from Participant E completely contradicted the data collected from the

other nine participants and numerous other resources regarding incarceration experiences

(DeVeaux, 2013, Haney, 2005, 2012, Lynch, Fritch, & Heath, 2012, Maschi, Gibson,

Zgoba, & Morgen, 2011). Participant E reported that her incarceration, "wasn't really an

adjustment." She explained that she was always a person that stayed at home, and "the

only problem with being incarcerated was that I was not able to get up and go whenever I

wanted." Participant E stated keeping busy with school and doing a lot of personal

reflection made her time go quickly. The only challenge Participant E described was

figuring out how to go about becoming a better person. She did admit to having

challenges while she was on work release. She said she had to report to her work release

parole office once a week, and she expressed how difficult it was living in Suffolk

County, and having to report to her Parole Officer (PO) in Manhattan. She described her

parole experience as being a "real struggle because of the extensive traveling."

Participant E denied ever being confronted by staff or other inmates, she denied ever

having any challenges or altercations while incarcerated and denied ever spending time in

solitary confinement. Participant E described her incarceration, including work release

parole, as being "a somewhat pleasant experience."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, several strategies to verify credibility,

outlined by Creswell (2009), were used to validate the quality of the data that was

collected. The strategy of triangulation was used to validate collected data (Creswell,

2009). Triangulation is the corroboration of specific themes described by participants

(Patton, 2005). Member checking, which involved all participants verifying the accuracy of the information in their recorded interviews and reviewing and comparing peer reviewed published data from several sources familiar with the psychological effects of incarceration with the collected data, were other strategies used to validate the quality of the collected data (Creswell, 2009).

Transferability

Implementation and adjustments of transferability were not needed for this study. The focus of this study was the potential psychological effects of incarceration. The findings of this study are not generalizable to anyone who has not been incarcerated in a local, state, or federal correctional facility.

Dependability

Creswell (2009, 2013) and Patton (2005) note the use of triangulation to ensure the dependability and reliability of a study. Participants reviewed their transcribed interview and were asked to authenticate the reliability of their interview. Participants were asked if there was anything in the interview they wanted to omit, change, or add. All participants stated they were satisfied with their transcripts as is.

Confirmability

To assure that my biases did not interfere with the credibility of the study, a journal was used to reflect my personal thoughts and feelings regarding participants' responses during the interview. It is my personal and professional opinion that one participant did not give a true account of her prison experience. After all interviews had been completed, this participant's account of her incarceration experience was

completely inconsistent with the experiences of the other nine participants. I can conclude that my personal bias did not interfere with the credibility of the study.

Results

This chapter will be organized around the research questions following a brief, more generalized introduction of the results. The research questions were: (1) How do former prisoners describe their psychological health prior to their first incarceration experience? (2) How do former prisoners describe their first prison experience? (3) What are the psychological effects, if any, that former prisoners describe experiencing? (4) How do former prisoners describe their postprison adjustment?

All participants in this study are identified as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, or J. Except for Participant E, the participant responses to the eight interview questions contained similar themes. Although each participant relayed somewhat different specifics to certain experiences, the same themes were consistent throughout his or her prison experience. All participants volunteered some details, but not all details of the crime that resulted in their first incarceration, and all volunteered information on their family life as a child growing up, and up to the time of their first incarceration. All participants were extremely humble, respectful, and expressed remorse for the actions that led to their incarceration. The participants, except Participant E, became emotional several times during the interview, and at times, displayed anger when recounting certain experiences.

There was a difference in the details of the prison experience between those who did long terms and those who did short terms. Participants A, B, E, and I, did not go into

extensive detail regarding many of the difficulties and challenges they experienced, but chose to describe their experience as, "a time for them to learn, and get themselves together." Participant E completely denied having experienced any challenges during her entire incarceration. Given the well-documented nature of the prison environment presented in the literature review, and the experiences described by the other participants, there is a possibility that the participant may have experienced trauma and chose to deny experiencing any difficulties, and instead described the incarceration as being positive as a way of coping (Cramer, 1998; 2009). Denial of a painful reality or fact is a recognized defense mechanism sometimes used to avoid experiencing anxiety and pain associated with a painful reality or fact (Kramer, 2010; Sadok & Sadock, 2010). Participant I explained that maximum security prisons, where inmates with long prison sentences are housed, are extremely more difficult than medium and minimum-security prisons, and the time is shorter. He explained that rapes and violence do happen in the minimum and medium security facilities, but that it is nothing like what occurs in the maximum-security facilities. The participants, except Participant E, relayed their stories as if he or she was currently inside of the prison giving an account of his or her daily experiences.

All participants were able to recall the exact dates of every step of their incarceration, including the date they were arrested and sentenced, the dates they were moved to and from each prison, the cell numbers and cell blocks they were housed in, and any events they considered significant. Except for Participant E, the participants stated, "no one could relate or understand what incarceration was like unless they actually did the time." Participants C, H, I, and J reported that there are things they did,

experienced, and felt while incarcerated that they will never talk about with anyone except someone who has actually been incarcerated in a penitentiary.

None of the participants appeared to have any difficulty answering the research questions, however, male participants were selective in what they disclosed. Male participants thought about each question before responding and paused several times while responding to each question, making sure to choose their words carefully before speaking. The male participants were courteous and respectful with their words. I got the impression that if I were male, the male participants would have been more comfortable expressing themselves freely. Male participants did talk about having friendships with at least one other inmate to be on each other's back at all times. Participants explained that having one person to "be on your back" is how they were able to have eyes or be able to see everything going on around them at any given time and be prepared for anything coming. Participants explained that having someone on your back at all times also eliminated surprise attacks. The female participants spoke freely with no hesitation and, except for Participant E, became emotional throughout the interview. They recounted their lesbian relationships and other experiences as if they were talking with their girlfriends and, with exception to Participant E, disclosed their experiences, in my opinion, as if it was a part of their healing process. Participants stated that talking about what went on really helps them to heal, and that they will continue to talk about it every chance they get. The female participants did express their difficulty in finding people who were sensitive, genuine, and compassionate about their experiences to talk

with. The participants, except Participant E, thanked me for conducting this study, stating, "people have no idea, and they really need to know what it's like in there.

Interview Questions

Interview Question 1: What was it like when you were incarcerated?

All participants answered this question by describing their family life and events leading up to and including the actual details that led to their arrests. As participants recounted their experiences of being incarcerated for the first time, the emotional impact of their experiences was clearly evident on their faces and in their body language. Their body language changed as they struggled to contain the emotions that were surfacing as they recounted their experiences. The participants, except for Participant E, admitted how they had no idea what they were getting ready to experience, and how they were not prepared for what they did experience when they first stepped into the penitentiary, and every single day during their entire incarceration. Except for Participant E, the participants explained that they heard stories about Rikers Island, NYC's largest and main jail complex, located in Queens, NY, but their experience, once getting upstate, was nothing like what they were told or expected. "Upstate" is the term participants used to refer to prisons north and north west of the five boroughs of NYC. Participant A was peppy and lively when he described his juvenile history as if it was his "right to passage," however when he began to tell about being sent to Rikers Island, his demeanor changed, and I got the impression that Rikers Island was a traumatic experience for him. The volume of his voice elevated, and he altered his demeanor to sound angrier and aggressive when he began to describe how he had to change his demeanor and focus on

creating and maintaining a "thug" character and respond in a way that, "would make them not want to get after me, for whatever reason." Participant A paused after every word. It was evident to me that he was choosing his words carefully to avoid telling something he did not want to disclose. He talked about how he thought he mentally prepared himself for going up state, to state correctional facilities north and northwest of NYC, and how he remembers specific details of when he walked into the prison for the first time. He described it as "walking into a jungle," and he learned quickly not to speak unless he was spoken to first. He associated his memory of walking into the prison for the first time as a scene out of the movie *Bad Boys*, saying his reality was just what he saw in the movie. He described how "intense fear" set in and then the feelings of total remorse. Participant I also reported that going to jail was the "in thing," and that "you had respect on the street if you went to jail," but admitted he was not prepared for prison. He stated, "I knew I had to maintain that respect I had on the streets and I would do whatever I needed to do to maintain that respect, and that "you could never blink." He mentioned that when you first enter prison, "you have to show your paperwork. Your papers let everybody know you aint a snitch!"

With exception to participants E and G, all other participants in their own words described their first incarceration experience as being scary and feeling extremely fearful when they first entered a state correctional facility. Participant I stated, "It was a dark time because you're away from society, you're away from family, loved ones, and you lose your girlfriend, and when you're inside, it's just you and your mind." Participant G stated, "I wasn't even afraid." When I prompted her by asking why she was not afraid,

she emotionally replied, "Because I was free." She continued to explain that by being arrested and sent to either Bedford Hills, in Bedford, NY or Albion, in Albion, NY, she was able to get out of that "prison of physical and sexual abuse" she experienced at home. She stated, "Getting arrested was like now I don't have to hide, and run, and fight the demons in the street or at home." Participant D was never in an adult facility but was incarcerated in a juvenile facility at the age of 12. She stated, "It was scary, my first incarceration wasn't my fault. I was a troubled youth, but to be in that situation, that's where you end up, with people who have done things, it kind of hardens you." She became emotional as she continued, "this was my first experience of knowing rape with women, kids on kids, stuff like that, and it's different." Participant B described his experience as being different from what he knew out in the real world. He stated, "With being in with a bunch of men with different characteristics, different ethnic groups and everything like that, survival is your main thing." He stated, "If an individual didn't have the proper things that you suppose to have when you get there, you have someone loan them to you, quote unquote, then therefore, you're considered a part of them however they see fit." I could see how hardened Participant B became as he explained that he saw a lot of death and how it made him more determined to live. Participant C described his experience as the "living dead," meaning, "not dead like you're just gone, you're in another world." Participant C described how you are prepared for war every day. He recounted when he first entered the federal prison, a man was stabbed in the neck with a screwdriver right in front of him. He sighed and paused as he told how after that incident, he called his mother to tell her that he was not coming home again because of

all the violence where he is, and that he didn't think he was going to make it. Participant J described how when the cell doors open the first thing in the morning, you mentally prepare yourself for whatever you may have to deal with that day, and "you already accept that you may die that day, or you may have to kill someone that day." Participant E explained that incarceration gave her different eyes, stating, "I never really had time to sit down and think about the chaos and the problems I was causing in my community, it (prison) gave me a chance to take a look at myself."

With the exception of Participant E, the participants described how they acknowledged their fear when they first stepped into the first prison and immediately began to develop a state of mind that would help them survive. Participants C, D, F, H, and J, all admitted they did not think they would survive their incarceration, and that they were prepared to die defending themselves. Participant H described prison as "the ultimate survival, like a phase of death. You're in shock, denial, acceptance, and feeling a roller coaster of emotions from day one, and the overwhelming fear of the unknown." He talked about how, as a white male, he was preyed upon from the first day he stepped into the prison. He described having to fight every day for two years to keep from "wearing cherry red Kool Aid lip color and sucking off some big guy named Bubba." Participant B explained how he would not allow his fear to distract him, and how he immediately went into survival mode. Participant F described the women's prison as being "gay for the stay," and how she never experimented with gay or lesbian relationships. She said women kept pushing and she gave in. She said she fell in love with another inmate and that relationship helped her through the time. She explained that

in her first relationship, her partner was the aggressor, and when she went to begin her

next sentence, she became the aggressor and started to develop the "butch" persona.

Participant G described the line of women standing against the fence when the bus she

was on pulled up to the prison. She explained that the women were claiming "their

women" as they got off the bus and she knew she was going to have fight for her life or

submit to any number of those women.

Interview Question 2: What, challenges, if any, did you experience during your

incarceration?

With the exception of Participant E, the responses to challenges they experienced

during their incarceration were consistent. All participants except for Participant E

strongly indicated that "survival" was their first and major challenge from the time they

stepped foot in the prison until the time they were released. No participants hesitated or

had to think of their response to this question. Male participants described the "gate

monsters going at it" day and night as unnerving. Gate monsters going at it refers to

inmates standing at cell bars screaming, rattling the cell doors, and using an object to rake

over the bars to make noise and get the attention of the correction officers (COs).

Participant J stated, "It is hard enough relaxing enough to fall asleep, but with those guys,

it makes it even harder." With exception to Participant E, the participants described how

they had to develop an alter ego or a "persona" to deal with the challenges with staff and

other inmates, and some admitted that the persona "was not really them." Except for

Participant E, the participants all described how they had to constantly fight during their

incarceration. They explained how backing down was not an option and that if they even

thought about backing down, the fear of what would happen to them gave them the drive to fight for their life. A number of the participants added that the time they did in solitary confinement was for fighting and seriously hurting someone. Except for Participant E, the participants described negative and abusive dealings with the corrections officers as being extremely challenging, and most described the difficulty of adjusting to the rigid regimen of the prison culture as being extremely challenging. Participant F talked about the abuse from the correction officers, and described it as being "mental abuse because it's a no-win situation." Participant A talked about being constricted as extremely challenging and described the COs as "racist rednecks" and how that scared him. He stated, "I was really scared, but not terrified, terrified would have made me not able to function, so I was able to hide my fear." He explained that for the first couple of years, he was doing OK because he had a lot of girlfriends visiting and family were sending him money, but during his last 3 - 6 sentence many of those family members that sent him money died and girlfriends stopped visiting. He talked about how prison started to take a toll on him. He stated, "Prison is not the place to be when you don't have anyone."

Participant E stated, "prison really wasn't an adjustment for me." She reported that she did not have any challenges, she stated, "I went to school and kept busy." I asked Participant E how she managed with the other inmates? She answered by describing herself as having an "antisocial personality." I immediately remembered that this participant admitted to being arrested several times for drug sales. Participant E continued, "I know one person, and that person is enough for me, so basically I wasn't interacting." She described her challenge as "basically figuring out how I can become a

better person, and how can I go about doing that." Participant B explained that after the initial shock and fear of entering prison for the first time, the first thought that went through his mind was survival, and how he was going to avoid being "new meat." He went on to say, "new meat" means sexual prey, determined by demeanor, and background, and reputation." He continued, "if you're soft, you become prey." Participant B described adapting to prison culture as being, "most challenging because inmates run the jail." Participant J stated, "There was no routine, every day presented new challenges for survival." Participant J told about how enraged he became when his mother visited him to tell him that his sister had been raped and murdered, and how the authorities brushed it off as a prostitute who was probably killed by a john, and how he had to keep from taking his anger out on someone else. He became emotional when he told how the case was never investigated and was closed without finding out who killed his sister. Participant J expressed the difficulty of dealing with the death of his sister and wishing the man who killed her would somehow be sent to the same prison he was in. He described how that news fueled the anger he was already feeling. Participant J did not disclose any encounters or altercations as a result of that anger. Participant G described one of her biggest challenges while incarcerated, aside from coping and survival, was dealing with the issue of her stepfather. Participant G reported that her stepfather physically and sexually abused her from the age of nine until he died when she was 17. She explained that the memories of what her stepfather did to her haunted her and she would always look for ways to make the memories go away. She also reported that when she saw a correction officer who was "tall, dark, and skinny like her stepfather", she

would go into a panic because it would bring back memories of her abuse. Participant G

also spoke about the verbal abuse from the COs and stated, "I can now understand how

slaves felt." Participant H responded by asking me to be more specific with the question,

because "there wasn't a day when I wasn't faced with challenges." He reported that

within the first two months of his sentence, he obtained a weapon and started fighting.

He felt he was not going home and stated, "I was going out fighting." He said he did not

have any common sense and had to learn quickly, but not before getting into daily

altercations. Participant H sighed when he reported that his biggest challenges were

dealing with the COs and other inmates. He recounted an altercation when his face

slashed and his ear was partially severed and how he was taken to the emergency room in

handcuffs and shackles. Participant H turned red and became angry, emotional, and

fearful as he described how the CO, who was guarding him in the emergency room

whispered in his ear while he was being stitched up, "karma is a m**** f*****, isn't it?"

He described being so angry and hurt that he cried because he wanted to get to that CO.

Participant H admitted to becoming upset telling about that experience and the anger of

recalling that experience was evident while he talked about that experience. Participant

H reported that he was traumatized when his cellmate hung himself in the cell they

shared and described some of his biggest challenges was dealing with the deaths of

friends he made over the 17 years inside. He explained that he lost a large number of

friends to acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and suicide, and how he could

not tell his parents because they did not understand. He recounted a time when he called

his mother to talk about the death of a good friend and how he broke down while on the

phone. He said his mother could not understand why he was so upset. Participant H explained how the COs gave him a "very difficult" time, and there were a few female COs that made life a little easier for him. Participant H reported that a few female COs would bring him food and have conversations with him. He reported having several sexual relationships with female COs and that this was common practice in the prison system. He stated he was grateful for those female guards because they helped him a great deal. Participant H described how he grew up in prison by being married. He explained how he met and married his first wife at the age of 22; she was the sister of one of his inmate friends. He explained how his wife could no longer deal with being a prison wife after he was denied parole by the parole board and wanted a divorce. Participant H stated, "I was married at 22 and divorced at 24."

With the exception of Participant E, the participants expressed a fear of dying in prison and not coming home. Participants C, H, and J all reported telling their mothers that they were not coming home, that they were going to die in prison. A number of the male participants reported the source of their fear was sometimes more so from the treatment by the correction officers, rather than from other inmates. Except for Participant E, the female participants became emotional when they talked about how uncaring, ugly, and degrading the corrections officers were towards them. Participant F reported having feelings of helplessness with the guards. She stated, "I knew if anything went down, the guards were not going to help me." Participant D reported that one of her biggest challenges was to stay as mentally strong as possible. She stated, "Girls who were labeled as weak were made into sex slaves." She described how she was moved

around to many different facilities and would have to prove herself by fighting every time she was moved to a different facility. She described having to fight for food, and how "only those who could fight got to eat." She talked about the anger she felt because of the constant sexual abuse she had experienced at home, and how that anger helped her to win many fights. Participant I described how raising himself and growing up on the street helped him deal with people inside prison, and that it made prison a little easier to deal with. He described himself as a "small guy" and explained how he had to be a "no nonsense tough guy," because he did not want to be mistaken as a punk. Participant C described how he had been exposed to trauma all of his life on the streets, and how he did not have to create a persona. He stated, "I survived on the streets and I carried myself the same way in prison, but the violent trauma in the federal prison was different, it's a different animal." Participant C described adjusting to prison as "psychologically challenging." He reported that he had a very hard time adjusting to incarceration. He stated, "You are never housed in a facility in your home state, and I had a constant fear of never seeing anyone I knew ever again." Participants B, H, and J, mentioned men being violated as an everyday and all-day occurrence, and how that threat kept them on high alert at all times. Participant B stated, "You could hear the screams and smell men being violated throughout the prison." No participant disclosed if and how those incidents affected them. I did not prompt the participants for further explanation.

Most participants reported that the New York correctional facilities that are north and northwest of NYC and the federal facilities are extremely racist environments. Those who were incarcerated in maximum-security facilities disclosed that many of the inmates

who were killed in prison were killed by corrections officers, and not by other inmates, which increased their feeling that they would not survive prison. Participants B, C, I, and J described how at midnight, men, whom they believed were corrections officers, dressed in white sheets and hoods, would walk past the cells, and anyone who was not lying in their bunk appearing to be asleep would be beaten. The fear in the voices of these participants was evident when they described how they had to lie still in their bunks, and were afraid to breathe out of fear of being found awake and subjected to a brutal beating. None of the participants would disclose if they had ever been beaten during one of these night raids and how it was never talked about while inside of the prison out of fear of being overheard by the COs or snitches; however, they did repeat several times that they had many difficulties with correction officers.

Participant G became anxious as she told how she was made to strip when she was taken to solitary confinement, and a male correction officer was videotaping her while she was taking off her clothes. She described feeling terrified and accepted that she was going to be raped by that officer that day. The next day, through another inmate's family, she was able to contact someone on the outside and get word to her mother about the incident. Within a few days, she was transferred to a minimum-security prison and did receive compensation as the result of a lawsuit filed on her behalf. Participant G reported that to this day, she is still affected by that experience, that the memory of the constant threat of being raped makes her anxious and nervous.

Participant J explained how it was mentally and emotionally challenging being denied parole by the parole board five times. He described how he did everything the

parole board asked him to do and he did not know what else to do. He described feeling anxious and depressed. He reported how he became withdrawn and had strong feelings of helplessness and despair. He told the story about another inmate who was in his 80's who had completed more than 20 years of incarceration. He explained that when this inmate was denied parole for the fifth time, the inmate had a nervous breakdown, became psychotic, and used his teeth to cut the veins in his wrist, and bled to death. Participant H described the same feelings of helplessness, depression, and worthlessness when the parole board denied his parole five times. He described how he did everything he was asked to do, and he eventually stopped trying so hard. He said the reasons he was denied parole by the parole board were exactly the same every time, the seriousness of the crime, and that it was hopeless because he could not change it. Participant J reported that after about 10 years in prison, he realized he had an anger issue. He said he and his mother developed a close relationship through her visiting him and he was able to tell her the reasons why he was so angry, and how that anger is what made him do the things he did that resulted in his being incarcerated. Participant J continued that when his mother revealed to him that she had no idea of the difficulties he was having with her husband growing up, he realized that his mother had nothing to do with what he went through at home and was able to release all the anger he felt towards his family. He said that he then shifted that anger towards the system. He talked about how his new challenge for the next 23 years was how to deal with the anger he now felt towards every CO and how he was being treated.

Interview Question 3: How would you describe your mental health prior to your incarceration?

Most participants described their mental health as being normal prior to their incarceration. All participants described dealing with various types of family issues but having no mental health issues prior to their incarceration. Participant C stated, "When I was sentenced to 20 years, I wanted to break down and cry, but nothing would come out." He described himself as being a sociable guy who liked to promote parties and do different things before he went to prison. He says he has no interest in doing any of those things now. Participant D stated she did not know what her mental health was. She stated, "I was an abused child, you lose feelings." Participant B described his mental health prior to incarceration as "unstable." He described being extremely angry because of the abuse issues with his father and taking his anger out on people in the street as a result. He stated, "I felt more free in jail." Participant F admitted to being an addict, and spending time in a psychiatric hospital, with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. She stated:

> I never thought I was attractive. I was so fat; I had a bad body image ever since I was a kid, so incarceration, the alter ego being manly, I didn't feel attractive, so maybe that's another reason why I'm feeling a little, you know, maybe I need a psychiatrist for real, I need a therapist mental health wise.

Participant H described his mental health before incarceration as, "the same as any other average 17-year-old."

Interview Question 4: How would you describe your mental health during your incarceration?

Many participants talked about how they sought mental health services and asked for medication to relieve the depression, anxiety, to help them sleep, and to help them cope with prison life. A number of the participants admitted to self-medicating while incarcerated. Participants reported that marijuana, cocaine, and alcohol were abundant and easily accessible inside the prison. A few participants admitted to never using substances before their incarceration but becoming dependent during their incarceration. Participant B described his mental health as being "in beast mode," which he defined as a "means of survival." He explained that beast mode is the persona he developed, "to keep from being a statistic." He reported that he did not think about what being a beast was. He stated, "I was coming home by any means necessary." Participant B explained that he witnessed a lot of death and was more determined to live. I observed how sad, and what I describe as a sense of despair, overtook Participant B as he talked about a death he witnessed that still wakes him up with what he described as "shivers" at night. He had tears in his eyes as he described witnessing an inmate bench-pressing 300 pounds when another inmate walked over to him and dropped a 100-pound weight onto his face, and the 300-pound weight dropped on the inmate and crushed his chest. Participant B admitted to pretending to be schizophrenic so that he could beat a case and get medication to help him get through his time. Participant B did not go into details of what happened that resulted in him having to pretend to be schizophrenic. He described "Thorazine as liquid handcuffs." He says it was common practice for people to fake mental illness to get out of trouble, and to get medication. He became emotional when he reported that the anger towards his father helped him make it through prison and how it

helped him to maintain that "beast mode." Participant I stated, "I'm trying to find the right words because it was different time frames, so it's hard to just pick out one word to define it. I would say it was scratchy." Participant I did not go into details as to what "scratchy" meant. He said his mind wandered a lot and he spent most of his time writing erotica. Participant C described his mental health as, "a ball of confusion." He reported spending more than five years in solitary confinement throughout his incarceration. He stated, "It must have done something to me because I fell in love with going in the shoe, I love being by myself." The shoe is another term for solitary confinement. I observed how Participant C passionately whispered how he loved being by himself. Participant G stated:

> I diagnosed myself as being manic-depressive at times, severely depressed, situationally depressed, or seasonally depressed. I know I have PTSD just from being molested. That man beat me and my mom like what you see on slavery movies you know, we were beat like that just because he lost all his money at the gambling hole on Friday night.

Participant D became emotional when she talked about how she was a cutter and admitted to attempting suicide a number of times. She stated, "I used to cut my wrists because you have so much pain, you just want to inflict it on yourself just to take away that painful thought that you have, you just don't care." When I asked Participant D if there were mental health services available, she responded that there were, but she did not feel that anyone really cared, and that they were just going through the motions. She added, "I would just tell them what they wanted to hear." Participant J stated:

I was always on edge. I always kept my head on a swivel, because I know that

any day that you come out of that cell, anything can happen, you know you really

don't have any complete control over anything because if the police want to

act up or the guy next to you get a messed-up letter the night before and he

wants to come out and just go buck wild on anybody and everybody, so you

want to be on red alert at all times. It could be your day; it could be your last day.

You don't know, it just keeps you on edge and I'm not going to say scared

because that was really not a word I would use, but I was always ready. Another

saying, I would rather be caught with it than without it. I kept my little knife on

me all the time because like I said, I'm going to take two or three with me before

they get me, so I kept going to the box because of weapons and things of that

nature. I wasn't going to let myself go out like that. I wasn't built like that.

Participant J also stated that a large part of his incarceration is blurry because he

stayed high on cocaine most of the time. Participant H reported that he was on suicide

watch for the first year or two because of his age. He reported that he sought out

psychotropic drugs to help sleep his time away, but after two weeks on the medications,

he noticed how "zombie looking" inmates who were on medications for years looked and

became afraid and stopped taking the medication. Participant H described how

traumatized he became when he was cut. He said he could not sleep, he heard voices,

and became addicted to the Tylenol 3 he was given for the pain. He reports that he was

diagnosed as being depressed and traumatized and that he is still traumatized by that

experience. As Participant H recounted this experience, I witnessed the scar on his face

turn red as he became upset and angry. I watched how Participant H seemed to have a flashback to that emergency room where he was shackled and handcuffed. For a moment, his eyes became empty as tears formed.

Several participants talked about losing their mothers while they were incarcerated and talked about the frustration and difficulty of getting permission to attend the funerals. Participants reported that in order to attend a wake or funeral for a parent, sibling, or a child, all salaries and overtime pay, travel expenses, and lodgings for two COs to accompany you had to be paid in advance.

Participant B became emotional when talking about the physical and mental abuse he experienced from his father. He explained that as difficult as prison was, he was away from his father, and that if it were not for his mother, he would have killed his father. Participant A became emotional and angry when talking about his father abandoning him and his mother when he was a small child. He also became emotional when he talked about turning to drugs to help him deal with the fear of having to take care of himself now that his mother was dead. Participant C talked about how he did not get one visit during his entire incarceration and that he wanted it that way. He explained that he told his family not to visit him. He recounted how early in his bid, another inmate lost his entire family in a car accident. He stated:

> The guys parents, grandparents, siblings, kids, everybody was in one of those
>
> Winnebago vans, and they got into an accident; everyone one of them was killed.

That guy was messed up, he could not even function because of the guilt of losing

his entire family because they were on their way to visit him in federal prison. I

don't want anything like that on my conscious. I told them not to come, ever.

Except for Participant E, the participants spent time in solitary confinement, or

"the box." Participant A spent six months in the box and described it as "the worse

experience he ever had." He talked about feeling "wiggy, delirious, and mentally hot."

He called the box "a jail inside a jail." Participant B did two years in the box, and stated,

"I'm pretty sure it had some effect on me." He reported that he had no human contact or

interaction with anyone, and described the experience as being, "a sentence within itself."

He stated, "You have to make some adjustments in yourself so you don't go bat shit

crazy." He described seeing people who have been in the box so long that they, "look

like those underground scrubs you see in the subway." He continued, "You can tell when

someone done bought it, you know, killed themselves." Participant D reported spending

four months in solitary confinement and said she did not mind being in solitary. She

says, "I was OK with it, at least in there I was safe." She described solitary confinement

as "being in my own little world" and how she still prefers being alone. Participant D

does admit that as a result of her solitary confinement, she has a tendency to shut down,

and when she cannot deal with something, she "turns herself off, and goes into some type

of depression." Participant I stated:

In the box, life just seems so small. It was like everything was just closed in

because you couldn't see anything, you couldn't see TV, you couldn't see people,

you couldn't talk to anybody, so it was like everything was just closed in

mentally. I was able to survive it by reading and studying. I spent a lot of time

making plans about what I want to do with my life, but for a certain amount of

time, you forget about the grass, you forget about the little things.

Participant J stated he survived the psychological damage of his nine months in

the box by thinking deeply and writing down in composition notebooks every single

aspect of his life in chronological order.   He explained that he wrote down what he did in

every grade, the girls he liked, and every detail of his life he could remember. He

explained that every time he went to the box, he realized he forgot people and things in

his life. He continued by stating that he "started thinking about futuristic things he

wanted to do when he gets out, and how he would go about doing it." Participant F stated

she was in the box for 14 days and described it as "mental torture." She says she had her

Bible and was grateful she had her glasses. She recounted how the COs broke her glasses

once and her mother was able to bring her another pair. She explained that not being able

to read when you're in prison is disabling. Participants A and G described how they

created dreams and pretended they were different people in different environments they

created in their minds. Participant A talked about getting lost in his artwork. Participant

G described how she would "astral travel to other places outside of the prison for hours."

Participants A and G described how they physically acted out pretend roles they created

in their minds to help cope with their reality, and this helped them to keep from "losing

it" while in the box. Participant H spent 45 days in the box and referred to the box as

"sensory deprivation tanks." He stated he tried to sleep as much of it away as possible.

He reported that he would talk to himself and have conversations with himself, fight with his pillows, talk to the walls and his bed, and count his steps inside the cell to keep from going crazy.

Interview Question 5: How would you describe your mental health postincarceration?

Most participants reported receiving some type of counseling when he or she was released. With exception to Participant E, the participants described symptoms they are experiencing postincarceration. A number of participants have been out of prison for number of years, but still experience things they know are not normal and cannot explain, and they feel strongly that what they are experiencing is a result of their incarceration. The most reported symptoms are flashbacks about things that took place in the penitentiary, or seeing him or herself going back inside, which then makes them anxious. Others reported symptoms include nightmares, difficulty sleeping, severe anxiety, paranoia, social isolation, trust issues, feeling inadequate, difficulties letting go of the personas they created while incarcerated, anger, and bitterness. Most participants report that they still wake up at times thinking they are still in the penitentiary. Participant A reports that he still has an "eerie" feeling when he thinks back on hearing the screams of men being raped. He said he had "intense feelings" when he was first released and has had extensive counseling to help him adjust to his postincarceration. Participant C reports that he knows something is wrong with him, but he is unable to describe it. He stated:

I am not the same person I was when I went in. I know that something is wrong

with me, but I don't know what it is. That's why I am in counseling now, to help

me figure out what the hell is wrong with me. My psychiatrist said I came out

and reincarcerated myself. I am just numb; I can't feel anything. My family and

friends are afraid of me and I am extremely paranoid all the damn time.

Participants C and D described how they prefer to be alone most of the time, and

often find it difficult to deal with people being around them. Participant D reported that

she forces herself to interact with other people to fulfill her job duties but will shut down

whenever she is confronted or when she experiences anything that reminds her of her

incarceration. She talked about how she is more comfortable with people who have

shared incarceration experiences. She also reported that her mental health when she was

released was not good, stating that her son's therapist told her, "she was like a chameleon

and just blends right in when something is wrong, and no one would even know." She

stated, "Sometimes it was good, but at times it was bad, and I just learned to adapt, and I

did not know how dysfunctional I was until I got a real job." Participant F reports that

she still wakes up with nightmares that she is incarcerated again, and that it is a fear that

she still carries with her. Participant G reports that she still feels dirty. She recounted

how a commissary worker took advantage of her and would make her perform oral sex

on him before she could get anything from the commissary. She states that she is

constantly reminding herself that she is not dirty but was taken advantage of. Participants

D, F, and G deny having any issues with their sexual identity. They stated, "It was a role

I had to play, and something I had to do to survive."

Participant B reports that he is always on guard. He stated, "I have serious trust issues, and I can't be around a lot of people." He also reports that he never gets a good night sleep due to the memories of all the violence that went on. He stated, "Extreme violence was the norm." Participant B stated, "I know I am not the same person I was when I first went in, because of the things I have been through in prison." He would not go into detail about what he was referring to. He said he still carries himself as if he were still "spinning the yard." Participants describe spinning the yard as walking around the prison yard. He said he walks around with an "I dare you" attitude. Participant B described how even more hardened prison has made him. He stated, "I can take someone's head off in a heartbeat and then go have dinner afterwards." He says he "doesn't know where that came from." Participant J reports that he is constantly making mental notes to himself to not do this or that, and continuously goes over and over in his mind what did not work so that he does not fall into the same rut or pitfall. He reports that before his release, he had "a backup plan, a plan to that backup plan, and another backup plan to that back up plan." Participant J stated:

> If you've done I say at least two years or more in prison, and you're not affected
>
> in some kind of way, that's b*** s***. Even though you're out here and you're
>
> having these flashbacks about things that took place in the penitentiary, or seeing
>
> yourself going back in the penitentiary, or waking up and thinking that you're in a
>
> penitentiary, something is wrong, because everyone I've spoken with, including
>
> myself will go through these flashbacks every now and then, when you wake up
>
> and you think your back in the penitentiary, or you have thoughts that you have to

go back to the penitentiary, gosh man, I can't take it, and it just amazes me that

everyone I've spoken with that has done at least ten years or more say the same

exact thing to me, and some of them have been out here longer than me, way

longer than me, and they still tell me they experience these things, and I ask them,

is it ever going to stop?

Participant H reports that his "self-esteem is not fine, but I can't identify it." He

says he tries not to think about his incarceration experience. He stated:

I am not done with the incarceration experience. I can go into a rage in a

moment's notice. I can pick a memory out of the air and go into a rage.

My speech and mannerisms will manifest back to the moment in time that

I am remembering. I can be in a positive mood, and all of a sudden, my

language and my body language will turn. Sometimes I feel like I'm split.

I sometimes do 'self-talk' to catch things I am doing.

Participant H said that he is resistant to counseling with anyone who has not spent

at least 17 years in prison. One major issue Participant H mentioned still having a

difficult time dealing with is the death of his mother. His mother died while he was in

prison, and he became emotional when he talked about how his mother did not see him

get released from prison, get married for the second time, and did not see him graduate

with his Bachelor's degree in Human Services. He recounted the last visit from his

mother and she made him promise that he would always take care of his younger brother

and his sister. He said at the time he could not understand why she was making him

promise those things, and he just said he promised to make her feel good. He said he

now knows why she said those things to him, and that she knew she was going to die and would never see him again. Participant H stated, "That s*** still f***s me up to this damn day."

Interview Question 6: What was it like when you were released from prison back into society?

All participants described difficulties and frustrations they experienced when he or she was released. All participant responses were consistent with the literature and with each of the other participants. Participant J explained how it was difficult riding in the car when leaving the prison. He described the adjustment from riding in a van handcuffed and shackled, to riding in a car with no restrictions. He described the nauseating feeling of going up and down the hills from the prison in a car. Participant J described the feeling he had when he was able to look out at nature, and able to breathe the fresh air. He mentioned how the smell of the penitentiary is very different from outside. He said even being outside in the yard had a different smell. He became emotional when he described the feeling he had when he went to Atlantic City and walked into the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in more than 30 years. Participant C described the difficulty of being around a lot of people. He relayed an account when walking through Manhattan close to rush hour, where he, "became extremely paranoid with all the people coming towards him and could not move." Participant C stated:

> All of a sudden, I saw tons of people coming at me. I had to stand up against
>
> the wall because I did not know where all these people came from. I stood
>
> with my back close to the wall and called the halfway house to please send

someone to come and get me because I could not move.

Participant B reports that he still carries himself the same way he did when he was in prison. He described himself as being a humble person, but states, "I never played, when I am out, I have my force field up." He reports that he is still afraid. He stated:

You want to do all the right things; your mind is set on doing what's right because you want to give yourself a chance, and you want to make them a liar when they tell you within 60 days, 60% of you all will be back in the penitentiary. I am determined to never go back inside.

Participant I stated:

It was frustrating because you're back in society after coming home, so your whole thing is just trying to fit in, and depending on where your mindset is at, you feel like you have to play catch-up sometimes, and that will lead you to do things that led you in there in the first place. Coming home at first was beautiful, then after that come the responsibility where you realize that you have to take care of yourself, and you can't be depending on everybody. Being a man, you have to go out there and look for a job, and you see that things have changed as far as how to fill out applications, no longer paper applications. You have to do it on line, and if you've never done it before, you get frustrated because some sites you go to, it don't lead you right to the application. You do find it, and then you have to answer all these questions.

Participant F stated, "That persona thing, it's taking me a while to shake that prison persona." She continued, "When you come home to the sober house with other

people from the prison, you still have that prison persona thing going on." She described

how she still sits and looks at the clock and makes a mental observation about what is

going on inside the prison at any given time. She described missing the structure, the

friends she met, and how she still has to remind herself that it is ok to answer the

telephone. Participant F became emotional when she talked about how difficult it was to

find herself when she stopped going in and out of jail. She said did not even remember

how to dress like a woman. Participant G described being very afraid when she was

released. She said she knew things had changed in the six years she was away and she

did not know if her kids would accept her, how she was going to get a job, and how she

was going to manage. She said she never worried about those things while she was in

prison. Participants F and G talked about how they gained more than 70 pounds while in

prison as a result of the medications and what they had to do to lose the weight.

Participant E talked about the difficulties she experienced finding work so that she could

stay out on work release.

Interview Question 7: What challenges, if any, did you experience when you

were released from prison back into society?

All participants described the difficulties and frustrations with finding housing,

employment, the stigma of being incarcerated, being discriminated against due to their

incarceration, and being overly compensating as a way to fit in. Some reported feelings

of helplessness, worthless, and other self-degrading feelings. Many of the participants

described feeling like an outcast and described feeling the need to make extra efforts to

prove they are worthy and deserving of a chance to prove their worthiness. Participant C

reported having employment challenges, but he would not go into detail. Participant G stated, "In prison, I was somebody. I had good jobs, other inmates and staff called on me because I knew how to do things. Outside of prison, I am a nobody." Participant A described being on parole as challenging because he had to adapt to "being conditioned and regulated." He said he "felt hindered." He talked about how when he was first released, he had a very difficult time adjusting to life outside of the prison and would intentionally do things to return back to prison. He said he did not want to deal with the responsibilities, and he was not able to cope. He described feeling like a failure as he got older and disgusted at how he wasted his life because he chose to do things he wanted to do, or thought he wanted to do.

All participants mentioned being extremely guarded about their personal space. Participants reported that they are extremely uncomfortable with people standing too close to them. Participant F stated, "No one invaded your space in prison unless you were fighting." Participant C stated, "Getting too close to someone was provoking." Participant B reported that he never sits with his back to the door, and he has trust issues. He stated, "You don't trust anyone, inside or out." He described being on parole as difficult and that, "it takes more effort to do right than to do wrong." Participant F explained that depending on the system to help her once she was released was difficult. She explained the difficulty she is having with her daughter, how her daughter is in counseling with abandonment issues and refuses to allow her to participate in counseling with her. She stated, "There is a lot going on and I keep my daughter in prayer." She also talked about how difficult it has been releasing her prison persona. Participant F

denies being bi-sexual and reports that she developed the "tough butch" persona to survive prison. She also described having to tolerate things the average person would not tolerate, out of fear of returning to prison. Participant C described the difficulties he is having trying to reestablish a relationship with his daughter. He explains that she was nine when he was incarcerated, and he has had no contact with her in all those years he was away. He talked about some of her habits he has very strong issues with, and she reminds him that he was not there and cannot say anything.

Participant H reports that he is not the same person he was when he went in. He reports that he has changed, psychologically and emotionally. He described how his default feeling is to respond with some type of aggression. He reports that he gets verbal, tenses up and gets ready to go into attack mode. He talked about how he sometimes snaps at his wife, telling her he is not a sucker, and then has to catch himself. He described the difficulty he has trying to let go of that anger and bitterness and described being scared from beginning to end. He described being afraid when he first got out. He stated:

> I couldn't believe it; I did not believe I was really out. I was an emergency release so I had no preparation. I had nothing on but jailhouse clothes. I left everything there. I was afraid to do anything. I couldn't walk anywhere by myself. My father took me to Walmart to get underwear, sneakers, and clothes, and I held onto him in the store. I told my father not to let me out of his sight; I was terrified of walking through Walmart by myself.

Participant H also described the difficulties he had in keeping employment. He recounted the many instances where he would get the job and either the background check would come back indicating he was a violent felon, or he would disclose that he was incarcerated as a violent felon. He described how employers would use excuse after excuse to explain why they had to let him go. Participant H reported how he got the NYS Department of Labor involved when an employer hired him and once the background check came back, they fired him. He pursued the case until the employer paid him $2,500 to drop the case. Participant E responded with a quote she learned since her release, "The Universe is always conspiring for your success." She reports that she did a lot of praying towards her release date. She also described how difficult it was for her to find a job because of the stigma of having a criminal record. She also reported how difficult it was for her on work release because of the traveling. She stated:

> These are consequences for putting yourself in these predicaments you know, you're ending up with a felony, and usually, I didn't think that finding a job would be so difficult. I know that some people say that their experiences were bad, and I could say truly that I needed to sit down, my experience was, I needed to sit down.

Participant I stated that his biggest challenge is being careful, and not being influenced by his friends. He said he knows they mean well, and want to help him, but at the same time, "they are not on parole and don't have the threat of parole hanging over their heads."

Interview Question 8: What, if anything else, would you like to say about your incarceration experience?

Except for Participant E, the participants took this time to add their personal opinions regarding the injustice of the state and federal penal institutions, and the parole system. Most added things they forgot to mention earlier in the interview. Participant B reported "I changed my thinking after my last bid. I realized how I was able to let new young guys know every inch of the jail." Participant B described himself as a "jailologist," which he defined as "a person who has studied every aspect of the penitentiary." He stated, "I became too familiar with the system, how the COs move, their steps, the sound of their keys, and the language of the prison." He talked about how he would get angry with the guys who were released and would come back. Participant G expressed that she misses being in prison. She states, "I missed being there because I developed a family in there. I had siblings, I had a TT, also known as an auntie, a grandma, I had a dad, a husband, and I had kids." I asked Participant G if these were all women who played those roles during her incarceration? She responded, "Yes, it was like a world inside of a world." I asked Participant G if she identifies as bi-sexual? She responded, "No, I am not bi-sexual, that was just a role for survival." She expressed losing friends when she got out because some of the women she had relationships with in prison wanted to continue the relationship outside of prison. She stated, "I am not having that."

Participant D says she has panic attacks and she wakes up screaming sometimes. She says she notices she has panic attacks or anxiety when she feels things are not right

in her life. She reports waking up at night with shortness of breath and screaming

because she feels like that little girl who is locked up feeling helpless and not knowing

what tomorrow is going to bring, or when she is going to end up. She reports still being

hurt because of her experiences, and she said she still carries that hurt. Participant D

expressed that the trauma of her incarceration still weighs on her, and as I observed, she

still gets "choked up" when she talks about her painful experiences. Participant E

reported that her predicament was like anything else, she stated:

> Everything is a choice and I chose that lifestyle because I was very progressive,
>
> I didn't start out early and that is why it took so long for me to be incarcerated.
>
> I started out by just having fun and having fun led me down that road. So, I
>
> could say sometimes when we are doing and making decisions, we make better
>
> decisions and crime is not an option. I tell people, short cuts; there are no such
>
> things. I thought the grass was greener on the other side, but it's not really, it
>
> might be wet. I am looking and I know from looking back, drugs played a big
>
> part, people who are around you talking in your head, that plays a part. You're
>
> surrounded by people who are talking, quite naturally you're going to say humph,
>
> maybe I should give that a try.

Participant F reported that she still experiences flashbacks and wakes up with

nightmares that she is back in prison. She states, "It's a fear I still carry with me. It's

something about that jail that comes over me; I can't even describe the feeling."

Participant J talked about prison behaviors he still has. He would not go into

detail about many of these behaviors, but said his wife has a pet peeve with him. He said

that he still finds himself getting into the shower with his underwear on, he still finds

himself eating super-fast and covering up his plate whenever he eats, he will not sit with

his back to the door, and his wife complains that he is too regimented, "everything has to

be done this time or this time between this time, and at that time I am going to do this or

that." He said he is still monitoring himself. Participant J said his wife has a whole list

of behaviors that he has from prison, and she points them out to him. He stated:

> You're coming out and you have a spouse; that is a whole different conversation
>
> within itself, because no matter how many trailer visits you may have been in,
>
> when you start cohabitating every day, it's a whole new ballgame, man, that's a
>
> whole other psyche by itself.

Participant J also reports that he is very suspicious in crowds. He stated that when

he is walking around New York, he is in "red alert" at all times and that the average

person will not see what he sees because they do not know what to look for. He says he

has a "heightened sense of alertness," and can see a crime before it happens. He said he

can tell by a person's behavior and has demonstrated to his wife many times how he can

identify someone getting ready to do something stupid before he does it. He also reports

waking up in the middle of the night screaming. He said he is not able to explain why but

thinks that he is dreaming he is back in the penitentiary and he wants to say "no, no, no,

all this time I have been dreaming." Participant J said he sometimes wakes up and asks

himself, "Has this been a dream all this time?" He explained that he sometimes feels that

all the time he was locked up, he was in a dream, and is now waking up from that dream,

something they call "the land of the living dead." Participant H described how he is still

affected by the sound of keys jingling. He stated, "Whenever I hear keys jingling, I feel like I am still in a jail cell." He also talked about how his wife and his father are constantly telling him they can tell when his mind goes back to when he was in prison, because his entire face and demeanor changes. He said he does not hide his prison experience, but on a regular basis, he has to call or visit one of his friends from prison just to talk. He stated, "The memories, the flashbacks, they all get to be overwhelming sometimes." Participant H admitted that he is not the same person he was when he was incarcerated at 17. He explained that growing up in prison has made him very angry and bitter. He says he has changed both psychologically and emotionally. He reports how he is emotionally numb and no one can crush him. He stated, "I built a strong wall around myself." Participant I reported that he has definitely changed from the time he first went to prison to now. He became sad as he explained that he sometimes has feelings of guilt because of the way his life turned out. He talked about his mother dying when he was five, and that his father was a drug addict and how he had to raise himself. He said he tries not to think about his mother and father and how difficult it was raising himself on the streets.

All participants expressed extreme remorse and regret for the actions that resulted in their incarceration, and all participants took full responsibility for their actions. Most participants are currently either working with organizations to help youth prevent incarceration or have expressed an interest or plans to help youths prevent incarceration, and to reduce recidivism.

Summary

This chapter explored prisonization and the psychological effects of incarceration through the lived experiences of 10 individuals who were formerly incarcerated. The participants were encouraged to use their own words to interpret what they experienced, the challenges, and the effects of their incarceration experience. Many of the events depicted by each of the participants were similar, as were the psychological effects resulting from those events. Except for one participant, all acknowledged that he or she is experiencing some psychological effects and described difficulties he or she believes are a direct result of their incarceration. Many of the effects reported are consistent with symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, institutionalized personality disorders, antisocial personality traits, and social-sensory deprivation. All participants detailed how his or her life has changed as a result of his or her incarceration, the difficulties of adjusting to life outside of prison, and his and her determination to avoid recidivism.

In chapter 5, I will connect the findings of my study with the relevant literature, discuss the implications of the results of this study, and discuss how mental health practitioners may apply the findings in pre-release preparations. I will conclude with suggestions for further studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I examined prisonization and the psychological effects of incarceration from the perspective of individuals who experienced it. The purpose and nature of this study was to explore prisonization and the potential psychological effects that may develop as a result of the incarceration experience and to understand if those potential psychological issues influenced successful postincarceration adjustment or possible recidivism. I sought out formerly incarcerated individuals, who were no longer on parole, to examine how they, in their own words, described their prisonization and incarceration experience and their postincarceration adjustment. Constant analyses of the interview data identified several key findings: (a) some participants reported experiencing psychological issues that they believe are the result of prisonization and the incarceration experience, (b) the psychological issues that participants reported are consistent with the symptoms of PTSD and complex PTSD, (c) participants in the study did not report that the psychological issues they believe they developed during incarceration influenced poor postprison adjustment, (d) some participants reported that the personalities they developed for survival while incarcerated were difficult to release postincarceration, (e) participants who were incarcerated as juveniles appeared to be more traumatized than those who entered prison as adults, (f) some participants reported that difficulty with prison guards and solitary confinement were the most difficult issues to deal with while incarcerated, and (g) participants did not report that the traumatic events they experienced prior to incarceration prevented them

from developing psychological issues during incarceration. These key findings

reinforced the importance of exploring this phenomenon from the perspective of

individuals who experienced it. Examining prisonization and incarceration from the

perspective of individuals who experienced it gave a clearer understanding of what

individuals experienced on a daily basis, how they describe their feelings regarding what

they experienced, how they coped with certain situations, and how they believe those

experiences affected them.

The key findings that emerged in this study and a comparison of the literature

review in Chapter 2 will be explained in this chapter. This chapter will also include a

summary of the results, a discussion of the limitations of this study, recommendations

and clinical implications of the findings of this study, and suggestions for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

The literature in Chapter 2 focused on prisonization and the incarceration

experience and its potential to develop psychological issues in some individuals. The

analyses of this study support the research in the literature that indicate that prisonization

and incarceration can influence the development of psychological issues in some

individuals. The analyses of the data may suggest an opposing viewpoint to the

arguments against the development of psychological issues in some incarcerated

individuals. One opposing viewpoint that emerged as a result of this study was by

MacKenzie and Goodstein (1985), who posited that there is no correlation between the

adaptation to prison culture and the development of psychological issues. The data also

did not support the position that psychological effects occur only after long-term

incarceration (MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1985; Rocheleau, 2013). All participants reported being affected in some way by their incarceration experience, and the psychological effects of some participants were not as severe as others. Even participants who were incarcerated for 2 years developed psychological issues. Analyses of the data did indicate that the psychological issues that developed during incarceration did occur without individuals realizing that they were affected (Haney, 2012). Participants who reported experiencing psychological effects they believe are the result of their incarceration reported that they were not aware that they were having issues until a short time after their release from prison. The literature in Chapter 2 indicates that psychological issues might not be noticeable while incarcerated but may become noticeable as individuals are readjusting to society (Haney, 2012).

The most common psychological effects participants reported experiencing are consistent with the psychological effects documented in the literature review. These effects include personality changes, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, dependence on institutional mechanisms, social withdrawal and isolation, interpersonal mistrust and suspicion, lack of self-worth, incorporating the inmate culture and code, PTSD, and PTSS (Armour, 2012; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015; Wolff et al., 2014). Most participants reported experiencing symptoms that are consistent with PTSD (Haney, 2012; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Lynch et al., 2014) and complex PTSD (Cloitre, Garvert, Brewin, Bryant, & Maercker, 2013; Liem & Kundst, 2013; Wolf et al., 2015).

PTSD and PTSS are documented to be the most common and most serious of the psychological issues that may develop as a result of incarceration (Armour, 2012). Noted

symptoms of PTSD and PTSS that participants reported experiencing include emotional

instability, introversion, feelings of inferiority, submission, social dependence,

unsociability, panic disorders, paranoid symptoms, alcohol and drug dependence,

depression, sleep disorders, mood disorders and irritability, and difficulty interacting

socially with others. Other symptoms reported by participants as related to their

incarceration and postincarceration experience are reliving the prison event with

flashbacks, nightmares, and triggers that remind them of incarceration, avoiding

situations that remind them of incarceration (e.g., avoiding crowds, avoiding open areas

where they are not able to sit or stand with their back against a wall, and having to be

aware of their surroundings at all times), keeping busy to avoid thinking about their

incarceration, and difficulty sleeping (Herman, 1992; Liem & Kundst, 2013). Symptoms

of complex PTSD that participants identified experiencing are institutionalized

personality traits resulting from incarceration (e.g., difficulty trusting others, difficulty

engaging in intimate relationships, difficulty making decisions), social-sensory

deprivation syndrome (e.g., spatial disorientation and difficulty interacting socially),

social alienation (e.g., feeling like they do not belong in some social settings), and

thoughts and fears that they will be returned to prison (Liem & Kundst, 2013; Schnittker

& Massoglia, 2015; Wolf et al., 2015). A key factor in determining the difference

between PTSD and complex PTSD is that the individual must have experienced

prolonged and repeated trauma (Herman, 1992; Wolf et al., 2015). Herman (1992) noted

that prolonged and repeated trauma could only occur when an individual has been

involuntarily held captive, not able to leave or flee at will, and is under the control of a

captor. Examples of prolonged traumatic situations are individuals in prisons, concentrations camps, religious cults, organized sex trafficking, and some families (Herman, 1992).

As indicated by the literature in Chapter 2, individuals experiencing issues with executive functioning and working memory as an unexplored effect of incarceration (Meijers et al., 2015). None of the participants reported any specific issues with executive functioning and working memory; however, a few participants did report difficulty with quickly and flexibly adapting to different circumstances (Diamond, 2013). The literature review noted that an individual's adaptation and survival of prison culture might be an indicator of how well an individual will adapt postincarceration (Souza & Dhami, 2010), potentially reducing the high rates of recidivism (Liem & Kundst, 2013; Visher & Travis, 2003). No participant reported experiencing difficulties adjusting to society as a result of the psychological issues they believe they developed while incarcerated; however, prison behaviors some participants reported experiencing postincarceration can be construed as postincarceration nonadjustment. For example, all participants reported that they are guarded about their personal space. Other examples of postincarceration nonadjustments are not shaking hands, wearing boxers in the shower, and covering their plate when they eat.

The data indicated that the development of psychological issues is different for each individual (Haney, 2012; Tomar, 2013) and that conditions in all prisons are not the same and have no bearing on who will develop psychological issues (Haney, 2012). The literature review noted that some individuals who accepted prison culture and were

transformed to institutionalization were unaware that they were psychologically

transformed (Haney, 2001).

Research indicated that the development of psychological issues might depend on

how well an individual adapts to prison culture and may also influence how well

individuals adapt postincarceration (Haney, 2012; Souza & Dhami, 2010). The data

indicated that adaptation to prison culture was both indigenous, developed while

incarcerated (Dhami et al., 2007; Haney, 2001; Wooldredge, 1999), and by importation,

using skills brought in to the prison to help adapt (Dhami et al., 2007; Paterline &

Petersen, 1999; Ricciardelli, 2014; Tewksbury et al., 2014; Wooldredge 1999).

Participants reported using the skills they learned before they were incarcerated and the

learned patterns of prison culture to survive their incarceration.

One issue that most participants reported having difficulty with postincarceration

is letting go of the personalities they felt the need to develop to adapt and survive the

prison environment. A possible explanation for the inability to let go of the personalities

that were developed to survive the prison environment once they were released from

prison may be explained by the theory of functional autonomy of motives (Allport,

1937). Allport (1937) posited that personalities and behaviors can be developed as a

result of trauma and used for specific purposes or motives and that once the environment

or situation changes, individuals will continue to hold on to those personalities or

behaviors even though there is no longer a need for that changed personality or behavior.

Analyses of the data indicated that participants who were incarcerated as juveniles

and grew up in prison were more traumatized than those who entered prison as adults.

Participants who grew up in prison reported the difficulties they have with adjusting to

life as an adult and finding themselves unable to cope with some things. The participant

who was first incarcerated at the age of 12 appeared to be more severely affected than the

other participants. Based on self-reports, this participant may also be experiencing the

most difficulty adjusting postincarceration; however, the participant reported that she is

able to handle the adjustment to postincarceration by focusing on work and volunteering

with youth organizations to stay focused. The other participant who was incarcerated as

a juvenile and released as an adult is dealing with anger issues and constant flashbacks

that can incite rage at a moment's notice. Both participants reported refusing to seek help

due to the lack of trust and the fear of people not understanding and instead relying on

other formerly incarcerated individuals for support. The literature review supports the

analyzed findings that individuals who are traumatized as juveniles are more devastated

by their prison experience and are more difficult to treat (Lambie & Randell, 2013). Most

participants identified solitary confinement as extremely stressful and a difficult part of

the prison experience. The literature review noted that solitary confinement could

influence the potential development of psychological issues in some individuals (Metzner

& Fellner, 2010; Shames et al., 2015; Story, 2014; Weir, 2014) and confirmed that

solitary confinement is stressful and a difficult part of incarceration. Research on the

psychological effects of incarceration dating back to the 1800s identified psychosis and

other psychological issues as being a result of solitary confinement (De Beaumont & De

Tocqueville, 1833). Participants also reported that dealing with prison guards made

incarceration more difficult and made every day living more stressful. The literature

review noted that one crucial aspect of surviving prison life was learning how to deal with prison guards (Paterline & Petersen, 1999). The literature review also confirmed that intentional abuse by prison guards is one of the most dehumanizing and stressful aspects of incarceration and is a contributing factor to the stress and psychological issues some individuals might experience during their incarceration (Crewe, 2012).

The CSDT was the lens used to analyze the data (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). CSDT theorized that an individual's history might be a factor in how one will adapt to trauma and may influence whether an individual will develop psychological issues as a result of that trauma (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). CSDT also theorized that not all participants would be affected by a traumatic experience (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). All participants reported experiencing traumatic family problems growing up and based on the analyses those family issues were the major contributing factor that resulted in their incarceration. The data indicated that some participants were jailed in local jails before they were incarcerated and that some participants reported experiencing physical and sexual abuse before they were incarcerated. All but one participant reported that unpleasant incidents before their incarceration prepared them for dealing with all kinds of people and situations; however, most participants reported that they were not prepared for what they experienced when they were first incarcerated. The data did not indicate that there were psychological issues that could be attributed to traumatic events experienced before incarceration. Analyses of the data did support CSDT's assertion that prior traumatic events would influence how some participants adjusted to the prison environment; however, analyses of the data did not support CSDT's assertion that prior

traumatic experiences may prevent the development of psychological issues (McCann &

Pearlman, 1990).

Limitations of the Study

I contemplated interviewing more than ten individuals and concluded that the

results would not be much different with a higher number of participants. I decided to

interview ten individuals, with the intent of interviewing at least one male and female

from the chosen ethnic categories to be studied. I was unable to recruit a Hispanic female

participant. As a result, I was not able to determine if incarceration and postincarceration

experiences differ between female participants from different cultures.

I was also unable to interview participants who were having difficulty with their

postprison adjustment, and who may have been re-incarcerated due to their poor

postprison adjustment. A possible reason for this limitation may be due to the eligibility

requirement for the study that participants could not be on parole. There is a possibility

that if individuals who were currently on parole were invited to participate in this study,

the participant pool might have included participants who were experiencing difficulty

with their postincarceration adjustment. The data from participants who experienced

difficulties with postincarceration adjustment and re-incarceration would have provided

valuable insight into the difficulties they experienced with their postincarceration

adjustment, eliminating the guesswork in finding solutions and remedies, and potentially

reducing recidivism.

Male participants underreporting their incarceration experiences and other

possible psychological issues were also a limitation. Male participants were very

selective with their words and the content of what they disclosed. Male participants mentioned that there are things they will not discuss with anyone who has never been incarcerated. Perhaps male participants would have disclosed more details regarding their experiences and the effects they are experiencing if I were male. All male participants became emotional as they recounted their experiences. They mentioned that showing emotions in prison is a sign of weakness and would result in being preyed upon and challenged by other inmates. These male participants felt comfortable enough to express the deep pain they were experiencing as a result of their incarceration experience in front of me. They would not, however, disclose all the events of their incarceration experience that they believe triggered the psychological issues they report experiencing. Research notes psychological limits and hyper-masculine attitudes as being common factors with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated males, making it difficult to accurately diagnose symptoms of depression and anxiety (Crewe, Warr, Bennett, & Smith, 2014; Haney, 2006; Iwamoto, Gordon, Oliveros, Perez-Cabello, Brabham, Lanza, and Dyson, 2012).

My inability to recruit participants who did not have family or friend support postincarceration, and participants who were less than 30 years old, were also limitations. Perhaps having that information would have expanded the results regarding the psychological effects and post-incrceration adjustment. Except for participants who did not have support from family and friends postincarceration, I do not feel these limitations would have significantly altered the results of this study.

The main focus of the study was to explore prisonization and incarceration to determine if the incarceration experience potentially creates psychological issues, and I am satisfied that the participants who were recruited provided ample data that support the findings of this study. This study did not explore the differences in postincarceration adjustment between the races. Although all participants report not having any difficulties adjusting postincarceration, there was no discussion on the factors that contributed to their successful re-entry.

Recommendations

This study in no way exhausted all aspects of prisonization, the potential psychological effects resulting from the incarceration experience, and postincarceration adjustment. There are issues that were not covered in depth in this study that warrant further examination.

One major recommendation that might be helpful is if researchers and the study participants are of the same sex. This may eliminate the hesitation of some participants to disclose events and issues they may be uncomfortable discussing with researchers of the opposite sex. I believe my inability to compare male/female prisonization and postincarceration differences effectively may have been the result of the hesitation to disclose by some participants.

An area that warrants further exploration is the role of family support during the incarceration and postincarceration adjustment. This information would provide valuable information on the potential psychological effects family members may experience as a result of the incarceration of their loved one. A specific area of focus should be the

psychological effects on the children of incarcerated individuals and the impact of those potential psychological effects during incarceration and the adjustment to parenthood postincarceration.

Another recommendation would be a detailed study focused on the incarceration and postincarceration adjustment explored by sex, race, age, support base, and length of time incarcerated. This study would be beneficial in understanding the factors that contribute to or hinder successful postincarceration adjustment. This information would also be helpful in assisting prison counselors and mental health providers with pre-release issues and assisting re-entry programs with the development of needed services and programs.

A study that is directly focused on individuals who experienced difficulty re-adjusting postincarceration, and who were re-arrested as a result of their difficulties is highly recommended. Detailed descriptions in the words of those formerly incarcerated individuals that experienced difficulty in their postincarceration adjustment would provide valuable information in identifying what areas of the postincarceration adjustment warrant the most attention. Strategies to overcome those challenges could then be developed and implemented.

One other area that warrants further study is the area of alter egos or personalities that incarcerated individuals may develop to adapt and survive the prison environment. It would be helpful if mental health professionals were aware and trained to identify alter egos and personalities, and the difficulties the formerly incarcerated have in letting go of those egos and personalities once they have left the prison environment. This

information may be an invaluable contribution in explaining why some individuals may potentially have difficulties adjusting to family life, employment, and socialization postincarceration.

Exploring the psychological effects of the parole board experience is an area that a few of the participants suggested should be studied. Participants mentioned the psychological effects and the feelings of helplessness of repeatedly being denied parole, and how those feelings never go away, even after they are released.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The implication for positive social change as a result of this study is that if mental health professionals were more aware and trained to identify the potential mental health issues of formerly incarcerated individuals, assessment and treatments could be implemented pre-release and continued post-release, with the hope that issues that impede successful re-entry could be avoided. The psychological effects some formerly incarcerated individuals experience can be reversed with treatment (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2001; Liebling & Maruna, 2008); however, mental health practitioners need to be aware of and able to identify the symptoms, and how to implement the appropriate treatments.

Methodological Implications

This qualitative phenomenological study was the best way to capture the prisonization experience and the potential psychological effects of incarceration. The prison experience and its effects are best described by individuals, in their own words,

who lived the incarceration experience. I was able to recruit these participants by reaching out to individuals who work directly with the formerly incarcerated population, and by snowballing. A few of the participants referred individuals who they felt would make a significant contribution to this study.

I interviewed, and audio recorded the participants at the Wyandanch Community Resource Center. This location was convenient for all the participants. I asked eight open-ended questions and allowed each participant to speak freely. Participants were free to disclose whatever they felt comfortable disclosing. All participants, except the participant who denied having any problems during her incarceration, became emotional during the interview. While participants were recounting their stories, I got the impression that in their minds, they were back inside the prison. Their words flowed effortlessly and were full of emotions and details. I was empathetic to the pain each participant was experiencing as they described their painful experiences. Most of the participants stressed that they are not bad people and that sometimes it is easy to get caught up in what is going on at home and in their surroundings. Tomar (2013) posited that incarceration has negative psychological effects on inmates that include emotional withdrawal, and depression. I saw these same effects on participants even though they have been out of prison and off parole for some years. The negative psychological effects resulting from their incarceration are still there.

I thought my experience as a NYS parole officer and mental health counselor in a maximum-security prison prepared me for anything dealing with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. The experience of listening to individuals describe the

pain they were feeling, and the events that triggered those emotions was a completely different experience for me. A couple of the participants apologized as they had to stop to compose themselves, but all wanted to complete the interview. All but one participant expressed the importance of letting people know what goes on inside the prison. One participant commented on how people do not care about the incarcerated or the formerly incarcerated.

Recommendations for Practice

Most all participants complained that there was no preparation for going home before their release. One participant recounted how his release after 17 years was fast and sudden. He had no preparation and had to leave the prison wearing his prison clothes. 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 formerly incarcerated individuals 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, and they should be able to explain to mental health providers on the outside what they feel they need help with. The list of resources provided should include 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 symptoms, and how to implement treatment for each identified symptom.

Job searching preparation would also be 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.

One crucial part of successful reentry that is hardly ever mentioned is the family. Family members have no idea what to expect when their loved ones return home and have no idea as to how to deal with some of the issues that may present when a formerly incarcerated individual returns home after spending years incarcerated. In my experience, family members believed their loved ones coming home were the same individuals who went away and they expected them to immediately go out and find employment. Family members should be made aware that their loved ones are not the same individuals, that they have been traumatized, and they should be aware of what to look for and what they can do if they notice their loved one having difficulty.

Conclusion

Incarceration is a traumatic experience that has the potential to psychologically change people for the rest of their lives. Awareness of the psychological effects of incarceration is an important factor in assisting individuals in finding and choosing different directions once they are released, potentially reducing the high rates of recidivism. People may not be aware of what incarcerated individuals experience and may be unaware of the psychological effects many formerly incarcerated individuals may have to deal with once they are released. Many may not be aware that some released

individuals are severely affected and are unable to adjust to society without some mental health assistance and a well-informed public.

All individuals are expected to comply with the laws of our society, and it is known that nonadherence to those laws may result in incarceration. Ignoring the traumatic effects that may result from incarceration however, makes it more difficult for formerly incarcerated individuals who are returning home. It is the hope that as a result of this study, more mental health providers and anyone who deals with the formerly incarcerated, become aware of the psychological effects that can directly result from incarceration. With expanded awareness in recognizing and identifying the potential psychological effects of incarceration, treatments that may assist formerly incarcerated individuals experience a more successful reentry can be developed and implemented.

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A Study on Prisonization
and the Psychological Effects of
Incarceration

You are invited to take part in a research study on your incarceration experience. The purpose of this study is to learn more about your adjustment to incarceration and your post incarceration experience.

You must be at least 18 years of age and have been incarcerated for a minimum of one year, and you are not currently on parole in any state in the United States.

This study is being conducted by a doctoral student of Clinical Psychology at Walden University.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

If you would like to be considered for this study, please send an email of your interest to:

██████████████████████

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

How Do I Get Involved?

If you would like to be considered for participation in this study, please text █████████

████ or send an email to ███████████████████ with your responses to the following

demographic questions:

Your name: _____

Contact information: _____

Sex: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Education: _____

Occupation: _____

Living situation: _____

Dates and length of incarceration: _____

Age at first incarceration: _____

Number of times incarcerated: _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What was it like when you were incarcerated?

2. What challenges, if any, did you experience during your incarceration?

3. How would you describe your mental health prior to your incarceration?

4. How would you describe your mental health during your incarceration?

5. How would you describe your mental health postincarceration?

6. What was it like when you were released from prison back into society?

7. What challenges, if any, did you experience when you were released from prison back into society?

8. What else, if anything, would you like to say about your incarceration experience?