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Reducing High-Risk Young Adult Offenders' Attrition From Reentry Programs

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MA, University of Maryland, 1996

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Reentry programs have been demonstrated to reduce recidivism. These same programs experience high attrition rates that degrade effectiveness and reduce capacity. Recidivism rates are reported as over 77% after 5 years from release which negatively impact society, victims and the released offenders. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to examine recently released offenders' insights regarding attrition from reentry programs to provide program administrators with themes that may be useful in addressing attrition. Social learning theory was used to frame the study. Audio recordings were collected during semistructured interviews with 21 reentry program participants. The recordings were transcribed and organized by stage and individual participant. The data was then coded to develop emergent themes about attrition. The themes were unawareness of reentry programs, inefficient learning processes, and lack of cooperative relationships. The themes that offer insight into the self-reported feelings were optimism turns to frustration when learned skills do not provide the expected outcomes and willingness to inform others about the reentry program. Results may provide reentry program administrators with insights to improve the design and execution of reentry programs to facilitate completion by high-risk offenders, which may lower the risk of recidivism.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The United States held an estimated 1,562,000 prisoners in state and federal correctional facilities while releasing an estimate 636,000 during 2014 (Carson, 2015). During that same year, the federal and state politicians began programs to release some offenders early, which added to the number of released offenders (Hamilton, Kigerl, & Hays, 2015; St. John, 2014). The most current statistics from the Bureau of Justice indicated as many as 68% of 405,000 prisoners released in 30 states in 2005 were arrested for a new crime within 3 years of release from prison, and 77% were arrested within 5 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014, para. 1). These statistics illustrate the magnitude of recently released offenders' recidivism and the likelihood that these released offenders will return to incarceration.

Reentry programs have been developed to improve released offenders' chances of avoiding the return to incarceration. In many studies, the effectiveness of the reentry program was gauged by the duration of participation correlated to recidivism (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon, Davidson, & Bynum, 2013; James, Asscher, Stams, & Van der Laan, 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa, Lugo, Pompoco, Sullivan, & Wooldredge, 2015; Naccarato, Brophy, & LaClair, 2013). These studies indicated a high attrition rate from the reentry programs. The recidivism rate of participants who did not complete the program was compared to those who successfully completed the program. The high attrition from the reentry program degraded the effectiveness of the reentry program because completing the program was a positive factor in avoiding recidivism (Latessa et al., 2015).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to collect first-person insights into the possible influence of social learning theory (SLT) on the released offenders' attrition from reentry programs. Akers (1973) postulated that criminal behavior is a learned process in which the deviant behavior results directly from environmental influences. Reentry programs use SLT to instill prosocial behavior through cognitive therapy, positive role models, and group meetings. Based on the data analysis, I hypothesized that attrition from reentry programs is influenced by SLT outside of the reentry program.

Background of the Study

Reentry program objectives are focused on prevention of recidivism. Latessa et al. (2015) analyzed the effectiveness of reentry programs and concluded that well-designed programs showed significantly improved outcomes regardless of the program format. Reentry program staff have attempted to decrease attrition rates by using rewards and punishment. Violations of probation result in offenders returning to incarceration. Rewards in the form of education, housing, and other basic needs are provided to participants. James et al. (2015) compared a new reentry program with treatment as usual for recently released young offenders. The results indicated the importance of completing reentry programs and the high attrition rates from these programs (James et al., 2015). Reasons for dropping out included recidivism, transient nature of the released offenders, lack of job/income, and lack of motivation (James et al., 2015). These two studies affirmed the value of reentry programs on reducing recidivism and the importance of completing the program as a significant factor in avoiding recidivism.

Other studies addressed specific elements of the reentry program. Grommon et al.,

(2013) analyzed the effectiveness of incorporating drug treatment into reentry programs

because two thirds of the incarcerated population have a diagnosable drug addiction.

Grommon et al. partially attributed the null results to the high attrition rates from the

programs. Hall (2015) examined 10 studies conducted from 1995 to 2010 on outcomes

resulting from educational programs for offenders while incarcerated. Hall found a lack

of evidence for significantly improved outcomes and questioned the effectiveness of

these educational programs. Forced attendance, via incarceration, is a method to reduce

the attrition rate, however, Hall did not evaluate forced attendance on the outcome of the

study. Wnuk et al. (2013) found that, for borderline personality treatment, uncontrolled

anger and a poor alliance with the therapist increased attrition. Wnuk et al. concluded that

qualitative research to understand the patient's perspectives regarding attrition from

treatment may lead to new strategies to promote patient retention.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014, para. 1) reported that 77% of prisoners

released in 30 states recidivate, which suggested to me that incarceration is not an

effective deterrent to future criminal behavior. I concluded the release of offenders does

not equate to the released offender will no longer engage in criminal behavior. Based on

The Bureau of Justice Statistics, once incarcerated, a person is likely to recidivate.

Reentry programs have demonstrated success at providing prosocial skills required to

avoid recidivism, but the participants frequently fail to complete the program (Latessa et

al., 2015). The in-depth literature review provided in Chapter 2 addresses the reduction of

attrition from reentry programs as an important factor in improving the outcomes of

reentry programs. A better understanding of the reasons for participant attrition may provide program administrators with information to improve the completion rate of participants in reentry programs.

Problem Statement

The United States, at both federal and state levels, has adopted criminal sentencing guidelines that have led to the largest detained population in the world (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2015). Offenders who fulfilled their sentencing obligations are released. An approach to reduce the number of incarcerated citizens is early release programs that shorten the sentences of offenders who meet criteria designed to distinguish nonviolent criminals who pose less risk of violent recidivism (Hamilton et al., 2015; St. John, 2014). These two approaches have resulted in an increasing rate of offenders reentering society (Korcha & Polcin, 2012). An estimated 68% of 405,000 prisoners released in 30 states in 2005 were arrested for a new crime within 3 years of release from prison, and 77% were arrested within 5 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014, para. 1). As the number and rate of offenders released from incarceration increase, the capacity of the reentry programs must increase to meet the demand.

Recidivism negatively affects society, victims, and offenders. Society pays for the prosecution, policing, incarceration, emergency response, community services, insurance rates, and distrust caused by criminal activity. There is an ongoing debate about the lengths of sentences for drug offenders. On August 3, 2016, President Obama reduced the sentences of 214 federal inmates (Associated Press, 2016). As an increased number of offenders are released and given the limited resources available for reentry programs,

reentry program administrators need to reduce attrition to improve outcomes for participants. Reduction in recidivism can reduce the future costs of crime and save future victims from negative effects of crime.

Recidivism rates are highest for young adults (Naccarato et al., 2013). The dynamic risks faced by young adults include risk taking, peer interaction, and biological immaturity (Latessa et al., 2015). Some improvement in recidivism rates has been observed when offenders participate in reentry programs (Latessa et al., 2015). The efforts to reduce the high prisoner populations in the U.S. prison systems are adding more released offenders into society with little or no significant increase in assistance (Korcha & Polcin, 2012). At the current reported recidivism rates, most of the released offenders will commit additional crimes and return to incarceration within 5 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014, para. 1). These circumstances point to a need for more capacity and better effectiveness of reentry programs to reduce attrition from the programs.

Reentry programs have demonstrated the ability to reduce the rate of recidivism (Latessa et al., 2015). However, these programs have varying rates of success, and many participants drop out before completion (Kroner & Takahashi, 2012). Not all reentry programs are equally successful. Studies indicated that the more effective programs are well administered with written doctrine, trained staff, and evidence-based practices to improve prosocial skills (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; Hall, 2015; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). However, all reentry programs experience attrition. The purpose of the current study was to understand why released offenders, who are at highest risk for recidivism,

drop out of reentry programs when this appears to be the best available path of avoiding future incarceration.

Purpose of the Study

Rates of recidivism are commonly used as evidence of reentry program efficacy. In many studies, the effectiveness of the program was gauged by the duration of participation correlated to recidivism (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). The recidivism rate of participants who did not complete the program was compared to those who successfully completed the program. These studies indicated a high attrition rate from the reentry programs. This high attrition degrades the effectiveness of the programs because completing the programs is positively correlated with avoiding recidivism (Latessa et al., 2015).

To people who have not experienced incarceration, it may appear counterintuitive that offenders would quit reentry programs that would significantly reduce the offender's risk of recidivism. However, those who are subject to release from incarceration have a different point of view. Released offenders face challenges to employment, housing, and access to prosocial role models (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). Many released offenders do not have the prosocial skills required to successfully manage these challenges (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; Hall, 2015; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). Risk factors for recidivism have been identified; however, these risk factors

have not included the viewpoint of released offenders regarding attrition from reentry programs (Ginner et al., 2011; Hall, 2015; James et al., 2015). An understanding of offenders' motivation for leaving reentry programs may provide program administrators with information to modify the programs to better serve participants' needs.

Research Questions

- What themes exist among recently released young adult offenders that offer insight into avoidance, attrition, or completion of reentry programs?

    1. How do recently released offenders describe their negative and positive expectations about life after incarceration both before and after release?

    2. How do offenders describe their perception of influencer's (friends and family) negative and positive support for reentry programs?

    3. How do offenders describe their perception of prior experience of influencer's friends and family with similar programs?

- How do the young adult offenders report their thoughts and feelings with regard to active participation in reentry programs?

    1. How do offenders describe their feelings about the program, including feelings toward the other participants and facilitator, any favorite people in group therapy, participation, willingness to take on unrewarded tasks, and reflections outside of the program?

    2. How do offenders describe the relative importance of attendance, including events that prevent or hinder attendance and events that do not interfere with attendance?

3. How do offenders describe their perception of the logistics of the program, including difficulty of transportation, condition of building, and time of day?

4. How do offenders describe their feelings as they prepare to come to the program and travel home?

5. How do offenders describe their stories about the program relayed to acquaintances outside of the program?

Theoretical Framework

According to social learning theory (SLT), people interact with their environment and learn behavior through vicarious, symbolic, and self-regulating processes (Bandura, 1971). SLT suggests criminal behavior is based on the modeling and acceptance by the social group of the offender. Many reentry programs are based on cognitive development of coping skills to overcome learned criminal behavior (Grommon et al., 2013; Latessa et al., 2015). The offenders are taught in group settings to adopt positive goal-directed behaviors. The group settings are intended to provide the participant with social support and positive role models. These programs may reward or punish participants to encourage compliance with program directives. Rewards include not returning to prison and in some cases provision of education and housing. Punishment is returning to prison. SLT suggests a strong relationship with the social environment. The purpose of this study was to explore whether social learning from antisocial groups outside of the reentry program is a barrier for recently released offenders to complete reentry programs.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was qualitative. This study required a systematic methodology of collecting and analyzing data to construct a theory for why high-risk young adult offenders drop out of reentry programs. The research design was grounded theory. There is little evidence in the literature about the reasons why offenders drop out of reentry programs. To learn why high-risk young adult offenders drop out, I designed and conducted semistructured interviews to collect and categorize data. The qualitative analysis revealed key themes related to attrition.

Grounded theory relies on the collection of viewpoints from the inside (Charmaz, 2014). I used semistructured interviews to elicit the first-person viewpoint of participants. Open-ended questions allowed participants to describe their experiences regarding the reentry program, including the motivations behind their behaviors related to attending the reentry program (Charmaz, 2015). Motivations relevant to the study were behaviors that increased or decreased the probability of attending the program. To understand the context of the data collected from the semistructured interviews, I also collected self-reported data to characterize the participants. The types of information used to characterize the participants were criminal history, educational achievement, drug abuse history, peers, family relationships, and other associations. As data were collected from these sources, the data were coded and categorized. From these data a rich understanding of the themes related to attrition was developed.

Definitions

Penal system: Included Federal, state, and local incarceration facilities. Although each facility is distinct in many ways, I examined the basic concepts of incarceration that included the physical separation of the convicted offender from society and the sole assignment of the responsibility on the offender (De Giorgi, 2016).

Reentry programs: A formal program with the goal of assisting released offenders to assimilate into society. Assistance included a wide range of services such as cognitive therapy, job related services, and addiction rehabilitation. Although there are reentry programs that are conducted prior to release, the study focused on post release voluntary programs (Grommon et al., 2013; Latessa et al., 2015).

Assumptions

The first assumption was the sample population of reentry program participants provided meaningful data about themes for attrition. I recruited volunteers from participants of reentry programs who recently started the program. This sample population included participants who may desist in the future from the program. To justify equating the perspectives of those participating in the program with those who left the program, I offer the following: The reentry programs are primarily voluntary. Therefore, a recently released offender must seek a reentry program and apply. There is a limited number of openings in reentry programs, and assessments are conducted of the possible candidates prior to initiation of the program. Completing these steps takes initiative and motivation on the part of the recently released offender. These steps removed from the population those candidates who have little to no interest in

participating in a reentry program. Those who are not willing to participate in the reentry program were not the subject of this study. This study focused on those who chose to drop out of the program. However, even those who start the program have a spectrum of motivation to complete the reentry program. As the program progresses, the strength of the motivation of the participant may increase or decrease. The population of participants early in their program includes those destined to desist and those destined to complete the program.

The assumption was that the life experiences of the participants early in their reentry program set the stage for attrition. At the point when the motivation to desist is greater than the motivation to stay in the reentry program, some participants drop out. The theoretical framework of SLT was used to understand the decision to drop out of the program, and the participant's life experiences provided clues about the themes related to the decision to drop out. This assumption was based on the hypothesis that the themes for attrition were not binary but existed on a spectrum. The intensity of the experiences for those who desist from the reentry program may vary, but the underlying experience was assumed to be similar.

The second assumption was that the study participants were truthful and open about their experiences. Although there was no benefit provided for the study participant that may have biased his or her answers to the interview questions, there was no benefit to openly answer the questions. Also, participants may not have been candid with themselves about their experiences. The open-ended questions and follow-up questions were designed to elicit details to improve the fidelity of the data.

Scope and Delimitations

The study was designed to identify themes describing the barriers for the participants to complete the reentry program. The sample used in the study included adults 21 to 30 years of age who were recently released offenders and enrolled in Baltimore, MD region reentry programs for fewer than eight sessions.

The sample excluded released offenders who did not seek participation in a reentry program and reentry program dropouts. Released offenders that are not participating in a reentry program were not within the scope of this study. The identification of participants who have dropped out of reentry programs is problematic. These individuals are not easily found and are not likely to be interested in participating in an interview with a PhD candidate.

Limitations

The qualitative data were used to identify themes regarding the thoughts and feelings of reentry program participants who volunteered for this study. The survey data provided information about the sample population; however, I did not intend to include a statistically representative sample. The study participants reported their thoughts and feelings through responses to open-ended questions. The closed survey questions were not validated, and some of the responses were vague and not quantifiable. The survey data were not used to prioritize by frequency, and none of the responses were excluded from the analysis. All data were collected from reentry programs located in the Baltimore, MD region. Studies of similar participants from other geographical regions may produce different findings.

Significance of the Study

High-risk offenders have been observed as frequently not completing reentry programs. Recent research addressed the efficacy of reentry programs to reduce recidivism rates, and researchers noted the attrition rate from the programs (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). Findings from these studies indicated the attrition from the reentry program reduced the effectiveness of the reentry programs. However, these studies did not address the offenders' motivations for dropping out of the programs (Ginner et al., 2011; James et al., 2015; Latessa et al., 2015). The results of the current study provided needed insights into the reasons why high-risk offenders decide to end participation in reentry programs. Program administrators may use these insights to improve the design and execution of reentry programs to facilitate completion by high-risk offenders. A significant factor to the reduction of recidivism by high-risk offenders is reentry program completion.

Significance to Practice

The quality of reentry programs may benefit from this study by providing administrators with insights that may be used to develop specific aspects of reentry programs.

Significance to Theory

Understanding the point of view of recently released offenders who are participating in reentry programs may provide insights to SLT in this specific context.

Significance to Social Change

Findings may be used to help recently released offenders desist from antisocial behavior, which would benefit society from the reduction of crime and the addition of prosocial members.

Summary

This study was intended to gain a better understanding of the themes related to the attrition of recently released offenders from reentry programs. The concept of completing a reentry program to improve the probability of avoiding future incarceration may seem intuitive to those who have not experienced incarceration. Studies suggested there may be unexplained factors that cause attrition of reentry participants (Wnuk et al., 2013). These factors may be associated with the environments caused by mass incarceration, social injustice, and personal accountability. The released offenders may be subject to antisocial models outside of the reentry program. According to social learning theory, individuals who observe modeled behavior may mimic that behavior in some circumstances. In Chapter 2, I provide a comprehensive review of the literature related to the study topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The United States, at both federal and state levels, has adopted criminal sentencing guidelines that have led to the largest detained population in the world (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2015). An estimated 68% of 405,000 prisoners released in 30 states in 2005 were arrested for a new crime within 3 years of release from prison, and 77% were arrested within 5 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014, para. 1). Recidivism rates are highest for young adults (Naccarato et al., 2013). The dynamic risks faced by young adults include risk taking, peer interaction, and biological immaturity (Latessa et al., 2015). Some improvement in recidivism rates has been observed when offenders participate in reentry programs (Latessa et al., 2015). However, these programs have varying rates of success, and many participants drop out before the completion (Kroner & Takahashi, 2012). To people who have not experienced incarceration, it may appear counterintuitive that offenders would quit the reentry programs that significantly reduce the offender's risk of recidivism. However, those who are subject to release from incarceration have a different point of view. An understanding of offenders' motivation for leaving the reentry programs may provide program administrators with information to modify the programs to better serve the needs of the participants.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature research strategy was to identify peer-reviewed research for reentry programs for young adult offenders found in the ProQuest and PsycINFO databases. ProQuest includes the Criminology Collection that includes research on the causes of crime and social implications including a subject area for reentry (ProQuest, 2016). The

ProQuest search engine provided the ability to search the documents for the key words

rehabilitation+reentry+recidivism+criminal. The search was further refined by selecting

research reported over the last 3 years.

The EBSCO search engine provided access to PsycINFO and allowed key word

searches of the document text. The initial key word search was

rehabilitation+reentry+recidivism+criminal. The search was further limited by a

publication date range of 2013 to 2016, and four publications that focus on reentry. The

search results provided eight peer-reviewed articles addressing reentry programs. I also

searched the Thoreau MultiDatabase with a key word entry of *reentry+offender* and a

date range of January 2015 to December 2016. I limited the search to peer-reviewed

scholarly journals and academic journals.

Theoretical Foundation

The most obvious reason for a released offender to desist from criminal behavior

is to avoid returning to incarceration. Incarceration is a punishment that nearly all will try

to avoid. However, the motivation to avoid additional incarceration is insufficient for all

released offenders to successfully complete reentry programs. Reentry programs focus on

teaching skills to recently released offenders. These are prosocial skills that are intended

to provide the recently released offenders with a better opportunity for reentry into the

communities. The programs have had some success but have not significantly improved

the overall recidivism rates and have shown high attrition (Bureau of Justice Statistics,

2014; Latessa et al., 2015). Apparently, there are barriers for participants to complete

these programs, and the purpose of this study was to explore these barriers.

Social learning theory (SLT) holds that learning can be accomplished through modeling, awareness of the model through observation, retention of the modeled behavior to develop knowledge, practice of the modeled behavior to develop proficiency, and motivation to replicate modeled behavior (Bandura, 1971). Bandura (1971) demonstrated that learning could take place through not just operant or conditional learning but through modeling. The components required to modify behavior begin with awareness of the behavior (Bandura, 1971). The subject must pay attention to the modeled behavior. The subject must remember the modeled behavior. Remembering is required for the subject to use the knowledge in decision making. The subject must then produce the behavior to become experienced with its application (Bandura, 1971). This construct is predicated on the subject's motivation to replicate the behavior.

By observing others, the person can learn behavior without trial and error. The person can also observe the emotional outcomes of the behavior experienced by others. Fear can be overcome by observing others in the feared activity without adverse consequences (Bandura, 1971). Likewise, behavior can be inhibited by observing others punished for their actions. The cognitive capacity of people is also used to determine future actions by foreseeing probable consequences of behavior (Bandura, 1971). People use their experiences to hypothesize the success of a behavior. Increasing the accuracy of hypothesis improves the likelihood that behaviors will yield desired outcomes.

Response conditioning is most effective when the subject is conscious of the contingent reinforcement. Most behaviors are learned deliberately or inadvertently by observing modeled behavior. The extent to which the individual associates the behavior

with an outcome determines the effectiveness of the reinforcement. Modeling is efficient and has the benefit of avoiding costly or dangerous mistakes (Bandura, 1971). However, the observer may favor short-term reinforcement over long-term consequences. The long-term consequences are more difficult to associate with behavior. For example, a young man looking for acceptance may value the modeling of antisocial behavior as a viable path to approval from antisocial peers while dismissing the risks of the behavior leading to incarceration (Bandura, 1971). Once the behavior is learned and the outcome is predictable, reinforcement is a powerful method for regulating behavior (Bandura, 1971).

Self-reinforcement is the way in which an individual provides self-rewards dependent on the proficiency of the behavioral outcome. Individuals who provide themselves with generous rewards upon mediocre outcomes are least likely to meet or exceed performance standards (Bandura, 1971). Individuals who abstain from rewards unless exceptional outcomes are realized can find themselves in a position where the high standards are never met. This can lead to self-punishing consequences that the individual will try to avoid through deviant behavior (Bandura, 1971). A variety of deviant behavior can help the individual to escape the self-generated distress. These deviant behaviors include drug abuse, grandiose ideation, delusions of persecution, suicide, and gravitation to social groups that embrace an antiachievement norm (Bandura, 1971). Social problems can evolve from tolerant and stringent self-reinforcement. Individuals who have failed to develop well-defined standards necessary for adequate self-regulating reinforcement readily engage in antisocial behavior unless deterred by externally imposed controls (Bandura, 1971).

Behavior culminates from interdependencies of stimulus, reinforcement, and cognitive controls systems. A key to behavioral control is the ability to accurately predict the outcome of the behavior (Bandura, 1971). Predicting the response of the environment can be learned by trial and error or by modeling. Trial and error is slow, and the responses can be misinterpreted (Bandura, 1971). Behavior partly creates the environment, and the resultant environment, in turn, influences the behavior. As a result, confused signals create dysfunctional behaviors (Bandura, 1971). For example, environmental cues can acquire control over somatic reactions when a neutral stimulus is closely associated with one eliciting a physiological response. The formally neutral stimulus acquires the power to evoke the physiological response (Bandura, 1971).

Akers (1973) refined SLT in the context of deviant criminal behavior. SLT mainly consists of differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement, and imitation. Differential association refers to the association with groups such as family or friends. These groups are influential to the individual because of early interaction, duration and frequency of the interaction, and closeness of the association with the interaction groups (Akers, 2013). Definitions refer to the individual's positive or negative realization, justification, and neutralization of criminal behavior (Akers, 2013). The role of definitions with respect to criminal behavior is to justify or neutralize the deviant behavior, thereby reducing stress associated with antisocial behavior. Differential reinforcement is the reward or punishment resulting from the criminal behavior (Akers, 2013). The reward may be social, emotional, or physical. The reward may be antisocial,

such as the pleasure derived after using alcohol or drugs or ill-gotten money (Akers &

Jensen, 2010). Imitation is acting out criminal behavior after observing the same process.

The purpose of this study was to understand the participants' hypotheses about the

reentry program and the basis for those hypotheses. For example, if the participants

hypothesized the reentry program would provide them with the skills needed to desist

from criminal behavior, this study would address the basis for this belief. This would

provide insight into the motivation that was overriding the desire to avoid further

incarceration. The basis of the belief in the reentry program may have included observed

modeling from influencers. Additionally, the study addressed the source of the

reinforcement to complete the reentry program. The source may have been internal,

external to the reentry program, or supplied by the reentry program. Many reentry

programs are based on cognitive development of coping skills to overcome the learned

criminal behavior (Grommon et al., 2013; Latessa et al., 2015). The offenders are taught

in group settings to adopt positive goal-directed behaviors. The group settings are

intended to provide the participant with social support and positive role models. These

programs may reward or punish participants to encourage compliance with program

directives. Rewards include not returning to prison and in some cases education and

housing. Punishment is returning to prison. Although reentry programs use group settings

to provide social support, the participants may not value the group society above other

influencers.

The application of SLT to reentry participants' motivations may help to explain

why a large percentage of participants fail to complete these programs. The participants

may not value the available prosocial models found in the reentry program, or the

participants may be strongly influenced by antisocial models found outside of the reentry

program. Additionally, if the participants are primarily influenced by antisocial models

found outside of the reentry program, the training provided by the reentry programs may

not effectively modify the behavior of the participant. By considering the participants'

social environment both within and outside of the reentry program, the point of view of

the participants may be better understood.

The SLT suggests a strong relationship with the social environment (Akers,

2013). The research questions were designed to elicit information beyond the reentry

program to identify all influential models self-reported by the participants. I sought to

discern whether the social learning from models outside of the reentry programs of the

recently released offender is a barrier for recently released offenders to complete reentry

programs.

Literature Review

Mass Incarceration

The war on drugs changed the way the United States views criminal behavior.

Some argued the U.S. government increasingly views criminal behavior as inevitable and

sees the role of government as managing the risks to prevent future crime (Patten, 2016).

This viewpoint is demonstrated through the mandatory minimum sentencing established

for drug crimes. The mandatory sentences remove the ability for the judge to use

discretion in reducing penal durations based on individual circumstances. The legislation

of mandatory sentencing laws also removes offenders from society to prevent future

crimes.

The same philosophy of preventing crime is used in working with foreign

governments to prevent the supply of drugs to the United States. These efforts include

eradication of drug fields. Unfortunately, herbicides used to kill drug plants also destroy

food crops. Destruction of the food crops leaves farmers without sustainable food

supplies and results in more available labor for drug cultivation (Gottschalk, 2016). The

government efforts have not resulted in a diminished drug supply (Gottschalk, 2016).

Much like the unintended consequences of destroying food crops of peasant

farmers in foreign nations, unintended consequences of the war on drugs is experienced

by the communities and families who are estranged from their young men, and

increasingly women, at the prime of their lives (Gottschalk, 2016). After returning from

incarceration, these young people are forever marked with restrictions to their ability to

participate in society. Whether it is prohibited access to high-paying jobs or voting rights,

the significant reduction of these young people's contributions to their communities

causes a structural barrier to improve the communities (Gottschalk, 2016). By removing

young people from the community and limiting their potential participation in the

community upon return, the potential for prosocial models in these disadvantaged

communities is reduced and leaves the next generation with a smaller opportunity to learn

prosocial behaviors (Gottschalk, 2016).

The war on drugs has spawned powerful special interest groups who protect the

continuation of mass incarceration policies. These special interests are continually

pressing for more money and more prisons. The message is the prisons are overcrowded

and expensive, and therefore society needs more prisons and more efficient methods to

house these prisoners (De Giorgi, 2016). Yielding to these special interest groups, the

political process proposes reforms to strengthen the penal system. Although the special

interest groups are facilitating a penal system that is larger and more efficient at

collecting, housing, and releasing an increasing number of offenders, the advocates for

the released offenders do not have an equal influence over the political process (De

Giorgi, 2016). Because of this weak influence on the political process, the released

offenders face many barriers to reentry to society. The released offenders often do not

have the means and societal support required to overcome the barriers to reenter society

(De Giorgi, 2016). Some offenders are provided support, but even with help many

released offenders recidivate.

For a person outside of the penal system, it is not logical that a recently released

offender would repeat behavior that results in incarceration. Gottschalk (2016) reviewed

the foundational factors causing the continued mass incarceration in the United States,

where eight million people are subject to some form of state control such as jail, prison,

probation, parole, community sanctions, drug courts, and immigrant detention. The

influence of mass incarceration extends to tens of millions who have never been arrested.

Communities and families are upended as their young men and women are sent away to

prison during what should be the prime of their lives. Likewise, rural communities have

built prison facilities in the hopes that the jobs and revenue will improve their failing

economies (Gottschalk, 2016). The system responsible for incarcerating a staggering

percentage of young Black men also incarcerates White men at rates far higher than other

Western societies (Gottschalk, 2016). Although the state control of Black men has been

the focus of news reports, the incarceration system has evolved to target other

disadvantaged groups such as Latinos and poor Whites.

The scope and size of the penal system creates a social environment that is

influential on recently released offenders. The mass incarceration penal system, as

described by Gottschalk (2016) and De Giorgi (2016), negatively influences the recently

released offender and his community. The research questions delve into the participant's

observations about his environment. While the participant may not understand the causes

of the environment, he was able to provide a description and perception of its influence

on his participation in the reentry program. The views of Gottschalk and De Giorgi

provided me with a perspective that aided in the interpretation of the released offenders'

responses during the interview. From this prospective, I was able to ask meaningful

follow-up questions which provided insight into the participants' experience. This

perspective was also used during the analysis of the data.

Individual Responsibility

The penal system focuses on the individual's responsibility to desist from

criminal behavior. Penal system reformers believe the problems with the penal system

stem from the lack of additional funding imposed by taxpayers (De Giorgi, 2016). For

example, motivational interviewing (MI) focuses on the correctional professional

collaboration with offenders and is being taught to correctional professionals (Iarussi et

al., 2016). Iarussi et al. (2016) concluded the MI training was effective for correctional

professionals but was contrary to their fundamental beliefs about management of inmates. The self-reported results of Iarussi et al. study indicated the correctional professionals understood the MI principles but that understanding did not translate into increased application of MI to daily encounters. This study demonstrated even when funding for evidence-based training is provided, new methods that are contrary to fundamental belief are not applied. This is one example of the intransigence of the penal system.

Another example is presented by Miner-Romanoff (2016) where incarcerated art students were provided a venue to display and sell art created within the prison. Miner-Romanoff demonstrated through self-reported instruments the positive change in attitudes of the artists and patrons. The artists became more prosocial and the patrons were more accepting of the inmates. The art program remained low priority even with positive results and funding. Like MI, this approach did not conform to the penal system norms. An art show in the community violated the norm of inmate separation from the communities.

The inmates' individual responsibility to not return to prison upon release is the foundational belief of the current penal system proponents. Lockwood, Nally, and Ho (2016) conducted a 5-year (2005-2009) follow up study of 3,869 (1,412 Caucasian and 2,457 African American) released offenders who returned to the Indianapolis metropolitan area. The dependent data were collected from the Indiana Department of Correction. This data included race, release dates, return dates, education level attainment and employment-related information. Logistic multiple regression analyses focused on examining contributing factors to recidivism among offenders and racial disparities or

similarities in post-release employment. Analysis demonstrated a close to 60% recidivism rate for unemployed offenders regardless of race. Recidivism rates were significantly correlated to the effects of race and other factors such as age, education, or employment. Lockwood et al. concluded that education level was the most important factor for job attainment and recidivism reduction. This study focused on the individual's attributes as the casual relationship to recidivism.

Because of the reported importance of employment to preventing recidivism, some legal barriers for released offenders have been removed by some states. Skall (2016) examined the recent changes of Massachusetts's laws and legal decisions relating to sealing and expunging criminal records. Criminal records are a recognized barrier for released offenders to obtaining housing and jobs. Criminal background checks are often used to determine the reliability of an applicant for employment and housing. Skall's premise was that sealing criminal records for lesser offenses does not endanger the public nor meaningfully restrict the public access to legal information. However, Skall reported sealing criminal records removed a major barrier to the released offender to reenter society. The Massachusetts legislature and judicial branches have passed laws that eased restrictions related to sealing records. Resistance to the further easing of restrictions, came from the constitutional right to a public trial. The right to a public trial has been interrupted by the judicial system to grant the public access to all criminal court records (Skall, 2016). Further, the court records are increasingly accessible through databases that are not under the courts control (Skall, 2016). The public often uses third party searches

rather than court provided searches (Skall, 2016). This makes sealing court files

unenforceable because once information is publicly shared it cannot be mandated away.

Skall's (2016) premise was the fulfillment of the incarceration should end the

punishment of the offender. The access of criminal records served to punish the released

offender by denying employment and housing opportunities and thereby prevent

reintegration into society.

Koo (2016) concluded prisoners with learning disabilities benefited from

enhanced educational programs that resulted in reduced recidivism rates. Koo reported

educational disparity of inmates to the general population is underfunded. The over

representation of learning disabilities in adult inmates has not been fully recognized and

is not being addressed (Koo, 2016). Education of adult inmates to address literacy and

obtaining general education development (GED) has been demonstrated to reduce the

recidivism of released offenders (Koo, 2016). Even with the demonstrated positive

results, the prisoner educational programs are underfunded. As such, the special needs of

prisoners with learning disabilities are not funded which leaves the learning-disabled

inmates without meaningful educational opportunities (Koo, 2016).

Substance abuse is one barrier that many ex-offenders must overcome to avoid

recidivism. Long-term abstinence is correlated with the number of days a recently

released offender spent in uncertain housing during the past 30 days. (Whipple, Jason, &

Robinson, 2016). The effects increased when participants reported more than 30 days in

uncertain housing. These results suggested that stable housing conditions can increase

abstinence self-efficacy which leads to longer abstinence from substance abuse (Whipple et al., 2016).

Released offenders that are violent and involved with gangs experience the same barriers to reentry as other offenders but for high risk offenders these barriers are more intense (Bender, Cobbina, & McGarrell, 2016). Consequently, high risk offenders have a more difficult experience post incarceration leading to an increased likelihood of recidivism (Bender et al., 2016). As people face challenging situations, their perception of the situation is often dependent on the fairness of the situation. These high-risk offenders' individual perception of fair treatment in reentry programs can potentially affect their post release behavior (Bender et al., 2016).

Fair treatment is determined via two perspectives: procedural justice and substantive justice (Bender et al., 2016). Procedural justice is defined by the acknowledgement of all parties that the process used to decide is fair to all parties. A procedure is considered fair when it is consistent, accurate, unbiased, ethical, correctable (when an error is discovered), and representative of all parties. Substantive justice refers to the fairness of the outcome across all people (Bender et al., 2016).

Bender et al. (2016) assessed why high risk released offenders are favorable or objectionable toward a reentry program. The research questions were to determine: (a) perception of the immediate and long-term challenge of return from prison to community; and (b) perception of benefits, problems, and recommendations for the reentry program (Bender et al., 2016). The study methodology was to interview seven men in Cleveland, OH and 18 men in Milwaukee, WI. All of the interviewees were participating in

Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative (CAGI) reentry program (Bender et al., 2016). The

participants were recommended by the reentry program administrators. Bender et al.

surveyed each participant to obtain information about their pre- and post-incarceration

experiences. Following the survey, a one hour long semistructured interview with each of

the participants was digitally recorded. The semistructured interview format consisted of

open ended questions with considerable probing. Bender et al. latter transcribed and

coded the interviews. Categories were created using a constant comparative

methodology. Inductive methodology identified concepts and themes related to the

participants' perception of the reentry program. Because of the methodology used, the

results are not generalizable but do raise issues that may guide future inquiries into the

effective implementation of reentry programs (Bender et al., 2016).

Bender et al. (2016) reported positive perceptions on the program's value of

preparing participants for job searches. Participants were satisfied with the quality and

delivery of this information. Bender et al. reported participant recognition that society

was not accepting of them in the general workforce. Employment was a major theme

both in the positive and negative perceptions (Bender et al., 2016).

Negative perceptions of employment revolved around unfulfilled commitments by

the program staff. Participants felt as though the program administrators exaggerated

their ability to find full time positions for them (Bender et al., 2016). They also felt that

some of the program restrictions were purposefully hid during the recruitment process.

Once the participants found out about the onerous restrictions, it was too late to withdraw

from the program. Bender et al. reported participants observed program instructors were

ill prepared for the classes and cancelled classes at the last minute. Canceled classes were very disillusioning for the participants because of the mental preparation for the class and the difficulty of rescheduling (Bender et al., 2016). A small number of the Milwaukee program participants were highly skeptical of the program because they felt the program administrators used unfair processes to increase participation and the staff lied to them (Bender et al., 2016). For the Milwaukee participants, the recommendations were to correct problems with the program while the Cleveland participants expressed ways to expand and build the program (Bender et al., 2016). Consistent themes emerged that indicated the importance of social support and both procedural and substantive justice. In some of the negative perceptions, the potential for defiance emerged (Bender et al., 2016).

Until the 1960, inmates had few enforceable legal rights in the judicial system (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). Legal scholars were uncertain about the jurisdiction of federal courts over state prison operations (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). Prison administrators operated their facilities as they saw fit. In the 1960s, the inmates gained access to the judicial system and federal courts increasingly allowed prisoners to bring suits challenging their conditions of confinement (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). Prison systems received court orders for remedial actions that limited the autonomy of the prison administrators.

In the 1990s, Congress viewed the prisoner lawsuits as onerous and oftentimes frivolous. The Prison Litigation Reform Act reformed the way inmates brought lawsuits to court to reduce the number of federal litigations (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). States

followed suit with similar restrictions for state suits to further reduce the opportunities to challenge the confinement conditions (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). To further reduce the impact of litigation on the state and local taxpayers, private companies were contracted to confine prisoners (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). The contracts had clauses for liability insurance to limit the states liability as much as possible. Privatized prisons increased in popularity from 67 in 1990 to 415 in 2005 (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). The result was a dramatic decrease in court orders against prison systems (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016).

Burkhardt and Jones (2016) reviewed the Bureau of Justice Statistics' Census of State and Federal Adult Correctional Facilities data series. They identified court orders or consent decrees to limit the number of inmates and specific conditions of confinement. The research determined the effectiveness of private verses public facilities in reducing the quantity of court orders (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). The conclusion was the differences between private and public prisons were small and inconsistent with respect to judicial actions between 1995 and 2005. Burkhardt and Jones did not find evidence to support claims that either sector is superior in avoiding judicial intervention.

The assignment of the responsibility for the individual to desist from antisocial behavior alleviates the penal system from accountability for recidivism of the released offenders. In this context, the penal system was generalized to incorporate local, county, state, and federal prisons with the understanding that many differences exist among these facilities. However, the common fundamental tenets of these facilities are physically separating offenders from society and placing the responsibility of desisting from future illegal behavior on the offender. As a result, programs designed to reduce recidivism such

as education, employment, substance abuse treatment, MI and Art (Lockwood et al.,

2016; Iarussi et al., 2016; Koo, 2016; Whipple et al., 2016; Miner-Romanoff, 2016) have

not been universally implemented throughout the penal system.

Not surprisingly, fair treatment was identified as key by participants of reentry

programs to the positive attitude of the participants (Bender et al., 2016). Penal

administrators have worked with legislators and private facilities to subvert the inmates'

access to the legal system (Burkhardt & Jones, 2016). While the most progressive

approach to aid a small subset of released offenders was to seal criminal records, this

approach was limited by the legal system (Skall, 2016). The result was the participants of

reentry programs are on their own to change their behavior while facing these societal

barriers. This study's research questions identified participant's thoughts about these

societal barriers and the resulting behavior. Awareness of these barriers, provided insight

during the collections of data during the interviews and analysis of the data.

Social Injustice

Society, through its political leaders, has created a mass incarceration system with

the fundamental tenet that people who are convicted of criminal behavior must be locked

up (Byrd, 2016). Other approaches, that may be more effective than incarceration, are not

widely implemented. Further, the individual is fully culpable for his criminal behavior.

There was no discussion about negative consequences for prison administrators who

released offenders back into communities without the required skills to successfully

reenter society (Byrd, 2016). As a result, the political process has created laws that are

ineffective or detrimental in the prevention of future crime (Byrd, 2016).

Teague (2016) reported on privatized probation and parole in the United States and provides perspective to the application to the English probation system. The U.S. probation system is fragmented and heterogeneous. Teague provided examples of the good and the bad aspects of the privatized probation systems. The first example depicted an Alabama judge who colluded with a private firm to coerce fees from misdemeanor offenders. The scheme was to convict the misdemeanor offender and assess him with a fine. If the offender could not pay the fine, he was placed on probation and managed by the private company. Since the private company managed the probation system, management fees were added to the fine. If the offender was unable to pay the fine and fees, the judge could sentence the offender to jail. Teague reported this scenario was found to negatively impact the poor who were coerced with the possibility of jail time to pay fees to the company managing their probation. This private probation system had no rehabilitation functions. Teague's second example of a California private probation company was very different. This company partnered with the local agencies and facilitated the rehabilitation of the offenders (Teague, 2016). The funding was provided by the state and not the offender. In addition to supervision, this model was designed to provide rehabilitation to the parolees (Teague, 2016). This privatization model was reported to be one of many models that ethically provided services to enable rehabilitation of released offenders (Teague, 2016).

The questions raised by Teague (2016) include the appropriateness of assessing fees on the offenders for their supervision. This pay for service model incentivized the private company to focus on the collection of the fees rather than the rehabilitation of the

offenders (Teague, 2016). Teague's biggest concern was those who were unable to afford such fees. He worried that they may resort to illegal means to pay the fees rather than be sentence to prison time. Teague asked should governments focus probation and parole on supervision of the offenders or the rehabilitation of the offender? Success criteria based on supervision was deemed a punitive approach where infractions of the conditions of parole will result in incarceration. Whereas, the success criteria based on rehabilitation success was determined as a long-term avoidance of recidivism approach. Teague believed these respective criteria shaped the structure and the operation of the private probation and parole systems.

Byrd (2016) presented an examination of the reentry programs as an extension of penal system. Byrd's primary argument was any reformation of the current punishment based penal system was used to politically protect its framework. Her observation was that penal systems have been demonstrated to be ineffective at stopping crime, to waste resources, and to needlessly ruin lives. Byrd proposed the popularity of the reentry programs was the result of penal advocates' desire to address the symptoms caused by the penal systems while not changing the fundamental system. The focus of politicians was to reduce the costs of the penal system by moving the supervision of offenders from correctional facilities to probation and parole systems outside of the facilities (Byrd, 2016). Rather than reducing the number of citizens that are in the penal system, Byrd reported the result was to increase the supervision beyond the walls of the facilities and maintained the population subject to state supervision. Byrd's second point was the reentry program theoretical framework was the offender caused the criminal behavior.

Risk factors were culture, gender, antisocial personality, motivation and functioning. All risk factors were based on the individual (Byrd, 2016). Byrd noticed culture and gender were on parity with mental illness and functioning. Risk factors were used to identify the individuals who were less likely to successfully reenter society. By placing the responsibility for success on the offender, the social structures that created a barrier to the offender's success are not addressed. Byrd provided the analogy of a healthy fish placed in a lush green meadow; the fish will die because of the environment. Providing education and housing to a released offender provided no benefit if his status as a felon prevented securing a well-paying position (Byrd, 2016). Because the reentry programs were extension of the penal system, designed to supervise offenders, the structural barriers in society were not addressed. Therefore, all the causes for incarceration were still present once the offender is released (Byrd, 2016).

Recently released offenders faced barriers to community reintegration and employment. The barriers included rural area characteristics; race and gender; housing; education; health issues; lack of employment experience and job skills; low wages; Negligent Hiring Law; lack of social skills; passive employment search; lack of confidence to actively job search; assuming applying for a job is not worth the rejection; not knowing how to discuss their legal history in the least damaging way; unrealistic expectations about job prospects; need for assistance to obtain identification for employment documentation; inability to recognize stress; difficulty of being contacted by potential employer while living in shelters or other transitional housing; advancing age of ex-offenders; and collateral consequences of laws restricting the ex-offender's public

assistance, firearm restrictions, licensing related to vehicle and professional occupations

(Harley, 2014).

Employer perspectives were positive when ex-offenders completed transitional

employment program after release, specific job skill training and general work readiness

training (Harley, 2014). The perspective employer was less interested in government

incentives, transportation assistance, possible legal changes, and references from faith-

based organizations and prisons (Harley, 2014). Employers were not interested in the past

behaviors except to the extent that past behaviors predicted future behaviors. Therefore,

the ex-offender must be able to articulate clearly why his past behavior will not be

repeated (Harley, 2014). The ex-offender must express remorse and then shift the

conversation from what happened in the past to what he can do for the employer today.

The legal obstacles to ex-offender employment were extensive and proved to be

confusing and frustrating (Harley, 2014). The ex-offender can legally be denied a

position based on his criminal record. Positions, such as security and those requiring

interaction with the public or minors, routinely excluded candidates with criminal

backgrounds (Harley, 2014). As Harley described the barriers to ex-offenders, the ex-

offenders challenge of finding a path to employment and ultimately reintegration is self-

evident. Understanding the barriers was important as I gathered data about the

experiences of the recently released offenders.

Female offenders were typically nonviolent and involved in crimes such as

larceny, prostitution and drug abuse which resulted in increased incarceration (Koski &

Costanza, 2015). The rehabilitation needs of women were different from their male

counterparts because of the issues that arose from pregnancy, family history, victimization (specifically physical, sexual, and emotional abuse), employment, education, and marital status. Koski and Costanza explored the ways female offenders processed personal events that impacted their decisions toward antisocial behavior. Koski and Costanza conducted a qualitative study with 32 women who participated in the Hartford CT Reentry Program. These participants were selected at random, 6-months before release from incarceration. The women were initially interviewed while participating in the reentry program. All the women agreed to participate in a 3-month follow up interview. After five years had passed, a phone interview was also conducted. Koski and Costanza presented an insight into the lives of women who had been involved in the criminal justice system. The Koski and Costanza noted the small sample size limits generalizability. The conclusions were the women that reoffend failed to cope with struggles that are unique to women (Koski & Costanza, 2015).

Upon release from the penal system, the reentry program participant faced a confusing maze of socially constructed barriers to society. Teague (2016) described the probation system that was designed to burden the parolee with monetary supervision fees with the threat of incarceration for those who do not pay. Byrd (2016) maked the case for considering the parole system as an extension of the penal system. Harley (2014) lists a wide variety of barriers not recognizable by observers not subject to incarceration. Released women offenders faced additional barriers beyond those experienced by men (Koski & Costanza, 2015). The research questions elicited barriers faced by participants and the participants' feelings about the barriers. This literature provided insight to the

wide range of social injustices faced by released offenders. This insight aided in the

phrasing of interview questions. The SLT framework guided follow-up questions to

determine if prosocial models are recognized by the participant and helpful to overcome

barriers.

Summary and Conclusions

To research the point of view of reentry program participants, their environment

must be examined and understood. From the literature review the major themes found in

the reentry participants' environment were a penal system that resulted in mass

incarceration, an expectation that the individual was solely responsible for his behavior

and social injustice of erected barriers to reintegration into the society. The penal system

has perpetuated the belief that incarceration leads to less crime. In concert with

politicians and the judicial system, the penal system special interest groups have

increased the number of penal facilities while the accountability for the recidivism rates

has been placed on the individual released offender. The political system created laws

that imposed mandatory sentences that increased incarceration duration based on past

criminal behavior. High recidivism rates resulted in long sentences for repeat offenders.

Upon release from the penal system, the reentry program participant faced a confusing

maze of socially constructed barriers to society. Teague (2016) describes the probation

system designed to burden the parolee with monetary supervision fees with the threat of

incarceration for those who do not pay.

Central to the knowledge about recidivism was the belief in individual

responsibility for criminal behavior which requires the offender to take sole responsibility

for his behavior. It followed the offender is solely responsible to desist from criminal behavior. SLT holds the environment of the individual can lead to behavior through modeling. This study documented the point of view of the participants with respect to their influential models to desist from antisocial behavior and overcome the barriers in place today. To discern the point of view of the reentry program participants, Chapter 3: Research Method presents the collection of data about the participants' environmental influences through interviews. Qualitative analysis of the collected data provided themes that may provide insight into why recently released offenders fail to complete of reentry programs.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Rates of recidivism are commonly used as evidence of reentry program efficacy. In many studies, the effectiveness of the program was gauged by the duration of participation correlated to recidivism (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). The recidivism rate of participants who did not complete the program was compared to those who completed it. These studies also indicated a high attrition rate from the reentry programs. High attrition degrades the effectiveness of the programs because completing the programs is a positive factor in avoiding recidivism (Latessa et al., 2015).

To people who have not experienced incarceration, it may appear counterintuitive that offenders would quit the reentry programs that significantly reduce the offender's risk of recidivism. However, those who are subject to release from incarceration have a different point of view. Conducting semistructured interviews with reentry participants provided insight into themes experienced by the participants. An understanding of the themes experienced by offenders may enable program administrators to modify the programs to better serve the needs of the participants.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions for this study were as follows:

- What themes exist among recently released young adult offenders that offer insight into avoidance, attrition, or completion of reentry programs?

1. How do recently released offenders describe their negative and positive expectations about life after incarceration both before and after release?

2. How do offenders describe their perception of influencer's (friends and family) negative and positive support for reentry programs?

3. How do offenders describe their perception of prior experience of influencer's friends and family with similar programs?

- How do the young adult offenders report their thoughts and feelings with regard to active participation in reentry programs?

    1. How do offenders describe their feelings about the program, including feelings toward the other participants and facilitator, any favorite people in group therapy, participation, willingness to take on unrewarded tasks, and reflections outside of the program?

    2. How do offenders describe the relative importance of attendance, including events that prevent or hinder attendance and events that do not interfere with attendance?

    3. How do offenders describe their perception of the logistics of the program, including difficulty of transportation, condition of building, and time of day?

    4. How do offenders describe their feelings as they prepare to come to the program and travel home?

    5. How do offenders describe their stories about the program relayed to acquaintances outside of the program?

The nature of the study was qualitative. This study required a systematic methodology of collecting and analyzing data to construct a theory for why high-risk young adult offenders drop out of reentry programs. The research design was grounded theory. There was little evidence in the literature about the reasons why offenders drop out of reentry programs. To understand why high-risk young adult offenders drop out, I designed and conducted semistructured interviews. Through the interview process, data were collected and categorized. The qualitative analysis revealed the key themes related to SLT regarding reasons why participants drop out of reentry programs. Coding included infrequent or frequent family interactions, a trusted confidant from inside or outside the reentry program, and trust or distrust of reentry program staff.

Grounded theory relies on the collection of viewpoints from the inside (Charmaz, 2014). The first-person viewpoint was discovered through semistructured interviews with participants. Open-ended questions elicited the participants' thoughts about the reentry program. Participants described the motivations behind their behaviors related to attending the reentry program. Motivations key to the study were behaviors that increased or decreased the probability of attending the program. To understand the context of the data collected from the semistructured interviews, I collected self-reported data through use of a survey to characterize the participants. The types of information used to characterize the participants were incarceration duration, educational achievement, drug abuse history, employment history, peers, family relationships, and other associations.

As data were collected from these sources, the data were coded and categorized. Codes were used for analysis to identify themes. The continual analysis and adjusting of

themes provided convergence of the data. From these data, a rich understanding of the themes related to attrition was developed.

Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher was to interview the participants, record the responses, and analyze the data. I did not have a personal or professional relationship with the participants. Researcher bias was reduced by asking open-ended questions and recording the responses. Each interview was conducted in a neutral space within the same facility of the reentry program. Questions were phrased neutrally without an indication of the type of response expected.

Methodology

The methodology included semistructured interviews with reentry program participants. To identify the participants of the study, I addressed a reentry group meeting and handed out a flyer describing the study and providing contact information to volunteer and schedule an interview. At the scheduled interview, I reviewed the purpose of the study, the interview questions, and the consent form. I then provided the participant with an informed consent form. After allowing the participant time to review the form, ask questions, and sign the form, I started the voice recording device and conducted the interview. At the end of the interview, the recording device was turned off.

After each interview, a transcript was made of the voice recording. The transcript was uploaded to the data collection software. The interview was coded and analyzed for themes. The themes were compared to existing themes and consolidated as appropriate. As new data started to replicate themes, the data collection was ended.

Participant Selection Logic

        I surveyed potential reentry programs for inclusion in this study. The study population consisted of individuals currently participating in selected reentry programs. This population had already committed to a reentry program and provided informative insight about the differences between expectations going into the program and the realities of the program. The participants were volunteers from reentry programs in Maryland who had participated in up to eight sessions and were 21 to 30 years old. The sampling strategy was limited to recently released offenders who were participating in reentry programs. By excluding recently released offenders who were not participating in a reentry program, the study did not address themes about why recently released offenders do not begin reentry programs. This study was designed to discover why reentry program participants desist from the program.

        The selected population of volunteers from reentry programs may have been biased with participants who did not desist from the reentry program because they were volunteering for this research. Self-selected participants did not include those who had quit attending the program after a few sessions. Additionally, those who volunteered may have had a more prosocial attitude and may have been more willing to share their experience. This study was designed to discover the difference between expectations and realizations of reentry program participants and discern the reasons for the differences. The themes were not binary and existed on a continuum; themes included participants who ultimately did not desist from the program. The study population was limited to participants who had completed up to eight meetings and were 21 - 30 years old. This

population had recently been released from incarceration and had experienced the early

sessions of the reentry program. These experiences were similar for all participants

regardless of whether they completed or desisted from the program. By exploring the

experiences of reentry program participants, I discovered the themes about the

experiences of the participants. The intensity of the negative or positive experiences

informed the conclusions of the study.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrumentation included a historical data survey, interview

protocol, and audio recording of face-to-face interviews with reentry participants. I

developed the survey and semistructured interview protocol. The audio recording

equipment was used to ensure an accurate transcript for analysis.

The self-reported historical information was collected on a survey. The

information collected included incarceration duration, educational achievement, drug

rehabilitation history, employment history, number of peers and frequency of interaction,

family relationships and frequency of interactions, and other associations. I read each

question to the participants and recorded the data. This information was used to

categorize the participant into low social interaction, high social interaction, prosocial

environment, or antisocial environment.

This qualitative study included semistructured interviews to elicit the experiences

of reentry program participants. This data collection instrument was based on the SLT

notion that environmental influences outside of the reentry program may be contributing

to reentry program attrition. The open-ended questions addressed participants'

expectations before beginning the reentry program, the sources of their beliefs about the

reentry program, and their experiences of the reentry program.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment of the participants was completed by soliciting reentry programs for

participation in this study. The program administrators were contacted and provided

information about the study. Once the program administrator agreed to participate, I

worked with the program leaders to pilot the data collection. I addressed a reentry group

meeting and handed out a flyer describing the study and providing contact information to

volunteer and schedule an interview time at the reentry program facility. The interview

consisted of an introduction, consent form, survey questionnaire, and semistructured

interview. Interviews were audio recorded for later transcription.

Data Analysis Plan

The goal of the study was to find themes related to young adult offenders that

offered insight into avoidance, attrition, or completion of reentry programs. The data

collected included a closed survey to characterize the participants according to their

educational attainment, employment status, substance abuse treatment, and incarceration

history. The survey questions elicited the participants' social interaction and social

environment. The survey addressed the types and frequencies of social interaction by

querying about peers, family, and other associations. The social environment was

determined by questions that addressed incarceration frequency and duration,

employment history, educational history, and drug rehabilitation. Characterization of the

participants was important to apply SLT. Analysis of interview data from participants

who reported no social network or antisocial history may yielded different themes from participants who reported a large social network and antisocial history.

Following the survey, I conducted a semistructured interview to collect data about the participant's beliefs about reentry programs before beginning the program and experiences after a few meetings. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Each transcript was entered into NVivo where the data were coded to reflect positive or negative views, external or internal influence, realistic or unrealistic ideation, and self-determination or fatalistic philosophy. The interview chronologically moved through the stages experienced by the participant. At each stage, the interview elicited the experience and the anticipation for the next stage.

Table 1 is an example framework used for organizing the responses of each participant regarding preparation for release from incarceration, enrollment in a reentry program, and participation in a reentry program. This framework was used to organize the data by stage and individual participant. The responses were coded by each stage and individual participant. This organization of the data facilitated the identification of emergent themes both by stage and individual participant.

Table 1

Example Analysis Framework

Participants	Characterization	Stage 1 - Thoughts During Incarceration	Stage 2 - Thoughts During Participation in Reentry Program	
Part - A		*Coded responses for Stage 1 Questions*	*Coded responses for Stage 2 Questions*	*Themes by Participant*
Part - B		*Coded responses for Stage 1 Questions*		
Part - C		*Coded responses for Stage 1 Questions*		
		Themes by Stage		*Overall Themes*

Another analysis was the frequency of words used during the interviews. Word clouds are a method of visualizing the frequency of use of a word. Producing word clouds of the responses to the interview questions provided insight into the prevailing thoughts of the participants.

The data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously to identify saturation of the data. As participants were interviewed, the data coding and word clouds were monitored for expansion of responses. When the responses no longer expanded the

scope of the data and were repetitive of previous data, the data collection were

suspended.

<div align="center">**Issues of Trustworthiness**</div>

Credibility

Suspect responses were flagged in the data set and if datum was an outlier in the

analysis a note was included. The data were collected until saturation in the analysis was

observed.

Transferability

This study collected data on the experiences of recently released offenders from a

small number of penal facilities participating in reentry programs in the Baltimore MD

region. The theory of SLT suggests that the social environment of the participants was an

important influence on the data collected. This study identified themes for reentry

program participants themes for attrition from the reentry program. The findings were

based on participants' experiences in this geographical area.

Dependability

The steps taken to improve dependability of the data were to audio record and

transcribe the interview. This assured that the actual words used by the participants are

the data. The data were uploaded to NVivo which provides an audit trail of the data

analysis. A field note book was used to record the data collection and provided an audit

trail of the process. The methodology was documented in detail such that another

research can follow the same methodology.

Confirmability

The analysis included references to literature and findings by other authors that support the interpretation of the data.

Ethical Procedures

This study used participants that had been recently released from incarceration. Research shows that these participants are high risk for returning to incarceration. The high-risk nature of these participants creates concern about protecting them from negative consequences due to this study and required a Walden University Institutional Review Board approval (A00161980). The interview questions were designed to exclude topics that may lead to self-incrimination. The questions avoided discussions about antisocial behavior. Drug use was discussed in terms of participation in drug treatment programs. By discussion of participation in drug treatment, the attitudes about treatment programs were explored and discussions of illicit activities were avoided. In addition to the careful design of the questions, the researcher advised the participants to avoid self-disclosing criminal behavior throughout the interview process. Additionally, the researcher reminded the participants of their right to stop the interview throughout the data collection.

The names of the participants were not recorded and were replaced with pseudonyms. The raw data and analysis for this study was stored on my personal computer on a secured network.

Summary

Discerning the themes of recently released offenders related to reentry program attrition required careful consideration. The participants were a vulnerable population that must be treated fairly and kept informed of their rights. The participants understood participation in the study would not benefit them with respect to their legal status. They voluntarily consented to participation and were told that they retained total control as to whether they would terminate participation in the study at any point. The data were collected, stored and analyzed in a secured, systematic and repeatable manner. The structured methodology provided defensible data collected in an ethical manner.

Chapter 4: Results

Reentry programs are credited with reducing the risk of recidivism among released offenders. However, research has indicated that the retention of recently released offenders in reentry programs is low and the completion of the reentry program is significantly important for reduction of recidivism (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014), 77% of released offenders were arrested within 5 years of release. Current political processes to release nonviolent offenders and the fulfillment of sentences have resulted in an increasing number of released offenders (Korcha & Polcin, 2012). Efficient reentry programs are required to process the increasing numbers of released offenders. Increased retention rates for reentry programs may improve their efficiency. In the current study, I explored the experiences of released offenders currently participating in reentry programs to identify themes to answer the following research questions:

1. What themes exist among recently released young adult offenders that offer insight into avoidance, attrition, or completion of reentry programs?

2. How do the young adult offenders report their thoughts and feelings with regard to active participation in reentry programs?

Reentry administrators can use these themes to design programs that will increase the probability of released offenders will complete the programs and therefore reduce recidivism.

Research Setting

The structured interviews were conducted at the five reentry program facilities. One facility was next to railway tracks, which led to interruptions due to the noise of the trains. Even with some noise issues, the participants appeared to be relaxed and forthcoming with their answers during the interviews. The participants were accustomed to the noise of the trains and did not appear to be distracted during the interview process. None of the participants expressed concerns about the research setting.

Interview 19 was truncated due to a scheduling conflict with the participant. He had volunteered to address a new cohort of reentry program participants and participate in my interview on the same afternoon. About one third of the way through my interview, the reentry program facilitator interrupted our interview and announced that they were ready for the participant to address the cohort. I finished the interview but because of the interruption, the remainder of the interview was rushed and was about 15 minutes shorter than the other interviews.

The primary challenge for data collection was scheduling the interviews. I had over 40 reentry program participants volunteer and schedule time with me to interview. However, there was a great discrepancy between the scheduled interview time and when the interview occurred. Some volunteers showed up late, one more than 3 hours late, or others never showed up at all. When I tried to call them back to reschedule, I discovered that some of the phone numbers provided were incorrect. Additionally, some of the volunteers were arrested before they could come in for the scheduled interview. It does not appear that the study protocol was the cause of the no-shows because reentry program

administrators reported similar challenges with scheduling time with the participants. Even with the no-shows, I was able to interview 21 participants, which enabled me to achieve data saturation.

Demographics

The study included 21 participants from five different reentry programs in the Baltimore, MD region. The participants included 10 who were incarcerated once and 11 who were incarcerated multiple times. One had been incarcerated over 15 times, and another had been incarcerated for 11 years. Educational background ranged from six with no GED to nine with beyond a GED education. Employment history included five who never worked, 15 who were hourly employees, and one who came from a professional background. Eight had participated in drug rehabilitation programs. Relationships with family, peers, and friends were varied. Nine had large extended families while 11 had smaller families. The participants differentiated associates from friends. Five had a large contingent of associates with a few select friends while 10 considered themselves loners with no associates and very few friends. Seven relied on their partners and spouses as their only source of friends. Participants identified their children, partners, spouses, and parents as the most important people in their lives. One participant identified God as the most important person in his life. Details of the demographics are provided in Table 2.

In addition to the self-reported characteristics used in the analysis, I observed a diverse population of participants. Although most were male, two were female, and three were from the LGBTQ community. Most were African-American but there were a five

Caucasians. I did not seek a representative sample but was able to collect data from a

diverse group.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

Participant	Educational Background	Type of Employment	History of Incarceration	Number of Peers and Friends	Most Important Person	Theme by Participant
1	GED	Hourly	Once	Too many to count	Child	Self Determination
2	No GED	Hourly	Once	More than 5	Parent	Self Determination
3	Inaudible	Hourly	Multiple	Too many to count	Parent	Self Determination
4	No GED	Hourly	Once	Inaudible	Partner	Self Determination
5	GED	Hourly	Once	Less than 5	Parent	Fatalistic
6	GED plus	Hourly	Once	Less than 5	Child	Self Determination
7	GED	Hourly	Multiple	More than 5	Partner	Self Determination
8	GED plus	Hourly	Multiple	More than 5	Parent	Self Determination
9	GED plus	Hourly	Once	Less than 5	Parent	Self Determination
10	GED plus	Hourly	Once	Too many to count	Parent	Fatalistic
11	GED plus	None	Multiple	Less than 5	Child	Self Determination
12	No GED	None	Multiple	Less than 5	Child	Self Determination
13	GED plus	None	Multiple	More than 5	Parent	Self Determination
14	GED plus	Salary	Once	Less than 5	Parent	Fatalistic
15	No GED	Hourly	Multiple	Less than 5	Child	Self Determination
16	No GED	Hourly	Multiple	Too many to count	Child	Self Determination
17	GED	None	Multiple	Less than 5	Other	Self Determination
18	No GED	Hourly	Multiple	Less than 5	Child	Self Determination
19	GED	Hourly	Once	Less than 5	Child	Self Determination
20	GED Plus	None	Multiple	More than 5	Parent	Fatalistic
21	GED Plus	Hourly	Once	Too many to count	Child	Fatalistic

Data Collection

I read a prepared announcement at reentry group meetings informing the group about the study and requesting volunteers for interviews. The volunteers phoned me to schedule an appointment, and we met at the reentry facility for the interview. The interview began with an overview of the study purpose. I then provided the volunteer with the consent form and answered questions. After the consent form was signed and I verified the participants agreed to audio recording, I started the audio recording and conducted the verbal survey and semistructured interview. The data collection generally proceeded as planned with the minor exception of the truncation of Interview 19 due to scheduling conflict. The interviews followed the structure and were audio recorded. None of the participants asked to stop the interview.

The locations of the interviews were the five reentry programs included in this study. I conducted between one and five interviews per day. The interviews were between 30 and 45 minutes long. The recorded part of the interview was typically between 20 and 33 minutes long. The exception was Interview 19. The audio recording was truncated to 8 minutes due to a scheduling conflict for the study participant. During Interview 19, I asked all of the interview questions, but the responses were shorter compared to the rest of the interviews. The truncated answers provided the participant's viewpoint but were not as detailed as the other participants' responses. Because the questions were answered and I was able to code the responses, the data from Interview 19 were kept in the data set.

One of the reentry program participants was convinced that I was an FBI agent. This participant related that the only time he was asked to interview with a White woman, she was an FBI agent trying to lock him up. After a discussion about the research study I was conducting, he volunteered to be interviewed. He answered all of the questions and was detailed in his answers. I did not have any suspicions that the responses were tainted because of the earlier misperception, so the participant's responses were included in the data set.

One of the participants stated that he expected to see a lot of cornbread at the reentry program. When I asked for clarification, he explained that cornbread is cut in squares and he expected to see a lot of squares in this program. Other than this example, I did not encounter slang that was confusing to me.

Data Analysis

After the day's interviews were completed, I reviewed the audio recordings. Then I transcribed the responses in an Excel spread sheet. I then uploaded the transcript to NVivo for coding. The coding began by examining the survey responses. The survey was administered verbally with closed questions. Even with the closed questions, the responses were varied so I categorized them into groups. For educational background, the responses were coded as *No GED equivalent*, *GED*, or *GED plus continuing education*. Employment history was categorized as *none*, *hourly*, or *salaried*. Hourly jobs included manual labor, warehousing, and restaurant work. Salaried job included a professional job. History of incarceration was categorized as *once* or *multiple times*. The number of peers and friends was categorized as *less than five*, *more than five*, and *too many to count*. The

most important person in their lives was categorized as *child*, *parent*, *partner*, or *other*.

Table 2 provides the details of the categorized responses.

I ran a word count query for the top 10 words used in the interview. The results of

the query are presented in a word cloud shown in Figure 1. The word cloud shows the

most prevalent used word was *get* followed by *program*. This was not surprising because

the interview addressed the reentry programs and the participants were discussing what

they got out of the reentry programs. The top 10 words were positive or neutral, which

reflected the tone of the interviews. Many of the participants discussed employment.

Therefore, I was not surprised to see *job* in the top 10 words.

Figure 1. Word cloud of top 10 words used by study participants.

The open-ended questions were categorized first by the responses for each

individual question. I then categorized all responses for overall themes not unique to the

question. The coding for the research questions was as follows:

Research Question 1

What themes exist among recently released young adult offenders that offer insight into avoidance, attrition or completion of reentry program?

Subquestion 1: How do recently released offenders describe their negative and positive expectations about life after incarceration both before and after release? Coding terms were as follows: (a) did not know what to expect from the reentry program, (b) negative attitude toward reentry program, (c) positive attitude toward the reentry program, (d) did not want to be judged, and (e) thought I would get a job.

Subquestion 2: How do offenders describe their perception of influencer's (friends and family) negative and positive support for reentry programs? Coding terms were as follows: (a) negative. Examples included the following:

- "My buddy outside is stuck in his life",

- "I lost a lot of friends because they still wanted me to stay in the gang",

- "Some say I am wasting my time", and

- "My father only cares for himself and getting high";

(b) positive. Examples included the following:

- "Family is happy and excited", and

- "My friends said it was about time bro."

Subquestion 3: How do offenders describe their perception of prior experience of influencer's friends and family with similar programs? Coding terms were as follows: (a) did not know others in reentry programs, and (b) they had positive outcomes.

Research Question 2

How do the young adult offenders report their thoughts and feelings with regards to active participation in reentry programs?

Subquestion 1: How do offenders describe their feelings about the program, including feelings toward the other participants and facilitator, any favorite people in group therapy, participation, willingness to take on unrewarded tasks, and reflections outside of the program? Coding terms were as follows: (a) positive. Examples of quotes are the following:

- "Close friend in program,"

- "Everyone is here for the same reason I am. They want to change,"

- "Facilitators are here to benefit us,"

- "I tell others about what I am doing,"

- "When people ask I tell them about the program,"

- "I recommend the program to others,"

- "I volunteer because the program is for us," and

- "At the end of the day I feel like I have accomplished something important";

(b) negative. Examples of quotes are the following:

- "The people that don't feel like me do not come,"

- "I do not get close to others, I have trust issues,"

- "At the beginning of the day, it is a struggle because of the long distance and the feeling that this will not help me," and

- "At the end of the day, I am ready to go home."

Subquestion 2: How do offenders describe the relative importance of attendance, including events that prevent or hinder attendance and events that do not interfere with attendance? Coding terms were as follows: (a) nothing prevented me from attending the reentry program, (b) family emergency, (c) court dates, and (d) work.

Subquestion 3: How do offenders describe their perception of the logistics of the program, including difficulty of transportation, condition of building, and time of day? Coding term was long commute on bus.

Subquestion 4: How do offenders describe their feelings as they prepare to come to the program and travel home? Coding terms were as follows: (a) new routine, (b) get in the right mind set, (c) ready to go home, (d) focused on the environment outside of the program, and (e) accomplished a step to a better life.

Subquestion 5: How do offenders describe their stories about the program relayed to acquaintances outside of the program? Coding terms were as follows: (a) recommended program to others, (b) explained the program to others that could benefit, and (c) shared experiences daily with those who are close.

After each open-ended question was coded individually, the entire interview was coded as follows: (a) avoidance of influences that were credited for incarceration, (b) expectation of self-reliance included planning to obtain employment and sufficient income to care for family, (c) enjoys company of family and friends included responses that indicated that the participant would spend time with family and close friends, (d) negative comment on program, (e) no concept of rewarding one's self when asked about rewarding one's self for positive accomplishment, (f) positive comment on the program,

(g) self-interest responses included desire for employment to improve only their own life, (h) self-motivation recognition of the need to continue to attend the reentry program even when it was difficult and lacked external motivation, (i) social encouragement identification of instances where external motivation was received when facing difficulties, (j) social resistance to change identification of examples where external social pressures were contrary to the reentry program goals, and (k) desire to care for someone else identification when the needs of others are prioritized.

The theme for each participant was summarized as self-determination or fatalistic. Self-determination was judged as a participant that demonstrated through their responses that they could influence their own future by their actions. Those categorized as fatalistic provided responses that indicated that they did not have real control over their futures and lacked plans for the future. The identified theme for each participant is provided in Table 2.

Research Question 1

Qualitative: What themes exist among recently released young adult offenders that offer insight into avoidance, attrition, or completion of reentry program?

Theme 1: Avoidance of environmental influences that were perceived as contributing factors for past incarcerations. Environmental influences consisted of associates who encouraged or facilitated behavior that led to incarceration and the easy money that could be received by participating in illicit activities.

Theme 2: Social resistance to change from street activities to prosocial activities. Participants noted the desire of peers to discourage the participation in reentry programs. This led to the avoidance of long standing associates.

Theme 3: There is a lack of knowledge about the availability and purpose of reentry programs. There was little prior understanding of what the programs could offer and the benefits of the program until participation began. Many participants did not know or did not have any expectations for the outcome of the program. Many were directed to participate in the program by the legal system and others had been informed through family members. Many believed that the reentry program would lead to employment.

Theme 4: The participants had an expectation for self-reliance. There was a general lack of trust of others or the acknowledgement that they needed outside help to reenter society. The need for a source of money through a job was a major objective. They wanted to provide for spouses, children and other family members but found it difficult to obtain and retain employment. The inability to maintain employment helped some to see the need and benefit of the reentry program. Others noted that outside of the reentry program, there were no other areas in their environment that provided the support required to better one's self and acquire the skills needed for a career. Many were tempted to go to the street to obtain the desired money but were reluctant to risk incarceration again. They believed that they could secure employment if they had the requisite skills provided by the reentry program.

Theme 5: The expectation of self-reliance extended to others. Participants observed that peers who were not ready or "of the mind" to turn away from the street life

did not willingly participate in reentry programs. This belief that these individuals were not ready to change their ways, led to the participants avoiding this population as a coping strategy. The study participants felt no obligation to help those who had not decided that it was time to change. Study Participant 12 summed it up as "I will not let their problems become my problem."

Research Question 2

Qualitative: How do the young adult offenders report their thoughts and feelings with regards to active participation in reentry programs?

Theme 1: Optimism about the future was expressed very often by the participants. Study participants were excited about the information that they were learning at the reentry programs. They expressed a sense of confidence about finding a job and having the money they need to support their families.

Theme 2: Desire to inform others about the reentry program because they would like others to learn what they have learned. Most were unaware of the reentry programs before attending. They did not understand the potential benefits of completing the reentry programs prior to participating in the program and wanted to inform others who could benefit from the program.

Theme 3: Determination to attend the reentry program meetings was evident because the commute to the program was often difficult. Yet most prioritized the meetings above all else. Some identified illness of a family members and doctor appointments as example of things that could prevent them from attending meetings.

Theme 4: Gratitude the program existed. The participants learned skills not available to them prior to the reentry program.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

None of the responses were suspect as not being credible. As the interviews progressed, it was evident that the study participants had common themes in their thoughts and feeling such that saturation of data were achieved.

Transferability

Per the data collection plan, I collected data from five different reentry programs in the Baltimore region. The data resulted in codes that yielded themes. The data provided a saturation of the codes. Because the data converged quickly, the study results are transferable for those in the Baltimore region regardless of the reentry program. The influence of the external environment of the Baltimore region may not represent other regions in the US. Nevertheless, the themes developed from the data may provide valuable insights for reentry program administrators to further explore.

Dependability

The audio recording equipment worked well to collect the responses to the questions. NVivo was used to code the data and provided an audit trail of the analysis. The methodology was followed such that another researcher can follow the same methodology.

Confirmability

The analysis included references to literature and findings by other authors that support the interpretation of the data.

Study Results

Research Question 1

Qualitative: What themes exist among recently released young adult offenders that offer insight into avoidance, attrition, or completion of reentry program?

Finding 1: unaware of reentry program. Studies have demonstrated that released offenders who completed reentry programs are less likely to recidivate (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). Yet the sample of released offenders from this study were unaware of the availability and benefits of reentry programs prior to entry into the program. The themes from the interviews provide insight into this finding.

Study data provided insight into why avoiding environmental influences may be contributing to the unawareness of reentry programs. If we assume avoiding environmental influences was a common strategy used by past released offenders, then we can theorize the explanation for study participants' lack of awareness of reentry programs. SLT holds that role models must be observed before behavior is learned (Akers, 2013). If the role models are not seen, then the behavior will not be observed and replicated. The participants did not observe the behavior of participating in reentry programs. Therefore, the participants could not learn about the reentry program and the outcomes from completing a program. Now the participants are in the reentry program

and they, like their predecessors, are avoiding their old associates. By avoiding their old

associates, the participants are not modeling the behavior of attending reentry programs.

Without prevalent role models from reentry program participation to observe, there is no

social learning about reentry programs by the population engaged in criminal behavior.

Social resistance to change can also provide insight into the finding of

unawareness of reentry programs. SLT holds that learned behavior results from behavior

that is observed, learned, practiced, replicated and reinforced (Akers, 2013). The

participation in the reentry programs is not observable if reentry program participants are

avoiding old associates. Additionally, the interview responses cited a social resistance to

change from criminal behaviors to prosocial activities. The participants reported their old

associates actively dissuaded those in reentry programs (positive punishment) and

recruited them to participate in criminal activities (positive reinforcement). The

recruitment to criminal activities can be insistent which may explain why the reentry

program participants chose avoidance. When the reentry participants avoid a population,

knowledge about the reentry programs is not modeled.

Regardless of the social pressure against reentry programs, the study participants

were able to find and enroll in a program. Study Participant 14 learned about the reentry

program from a local news story on TV. He had been searching for a job for over a year

and happened to see this TV story. He was desperate to find a job and thought he would

give this reentry program a try. A more common reason for enrolling in a reentry

program was a trusted friend or family member informed the participant about the reentry

program. Study Participant 3 stated "I did not know anything about the program. My

pastor told me about it." Some were referred by a judge or parole officer. Study

Participant 10 relayed his story as follows.

> I was before the judge and had been caught driving on a suspended license to fix a
> car. I was a mechanic for 12 years before I was incarcerated. The judge sent me
> here so that I could get my license. I had no idea this place existed or what they
> did. But if they can help me to get my license and I can get work, I am going to
> try it.

These examples illustrated the challenge of educating the released offenders about

reentry programs. The person who most needs to understand the reentry program is

totally unaware of the programs, until an intermediary recommends a reentry program.

The people who will never need a reentry program seem to be knowledgeable but not

those who need the program.

Finding 2: inefficient learning approach. By observing others, a person can

learn behavior without trial and error. Social learning theory (SLT) holds learning can be

accomplished through modeling, awareness of the model through observation, retention

of the modeled behavior to develop knowledge, practice of the modeled behavior to

develop proficiency and motivation to replicate modeled behavior (Bandura, 1971). The

theme that study participants sought to avoid environmental influences that led to past

incarcerations indicates that the study participants have taken an intuitive approach to

addressing SLT influence on their behavior. The participants have adopted a strategy of

limiting exposure to the social influences they perceived to have caused their criminal

behavior in hopes of modifying their own behavior. It may be difficult to completely

avoid the negative environmental influences while remaining part of the community. Regardless, this is a common approach used by this study population.

Social learning theoryconsists of five stages (Bandura, 1971). Each stage must be present for learning to occur. Unfortunately, the participants are not aware of SLT which results in well intentioned behavior which does not address all the SLT stages required to successful learn skills needed to avoid recidivism. The participants have replaced the environmental influences (role models) with facilitators from the reentry program. The facilitators were positive role models capable to teach skills that can be used in the prosocial world. However, the reentry program role models are not in the real world and have not provided the reentry participants with a real-world experience. The reentry participants are not able to see the outcomes of applying these skills through a role model's experience. Therefore, the reentry participants do not see firsthand how to apply the skills in real world experiences. Since the reentry participants have not observed real world application, they have not fully understood the skill nor believed the skill worked and therefore cannot use the skill successfully. Or because of lack of practice, could not be proficient with the skill when needed and subsequently fail.

When the reentry program was contrasted with the social model of criminal behavior, SLT model was complete for the teaching of criminal behavior but incomplete for the reentry program. An example was the need for a source of money. During the interviews, study participants eluded to the relative ease of going out on the street to get large sums of cash through illicit means. While the reentry program participants were working for long term goals of self-improvement, they often reported the need for money

to pay their current bills. Those with illicit money, often flaunted the excess of money with expensive cars and jewelry thereby provided the observable proof that the illicit strategy was effective. Reentry program participants with long term goals were often up early to attend reentry program meetings and had difficulty meeting basic needs such as food and housing. In terms of SLT, the modeled behavior of the criminal activities provided the desired goal of money while the long-term consequences of incarceration due to illegal activities were less visible and not certain. When faced with the immediate need for money, the reentry program participant was aware of the illicit means of making money, had practiced the skill, and had received positive reinforcement through ill-gotten money. The negative punishment of incarceration was neither immediate nor certain. Because the reentry program did not provide an adequate learning environment, some reentry program participants chose the illicit behavior as a viable path. During the study, I had several volunteers schedule interviews who were incarcerated before the interview took place.

The skills provided by reentry programs addressed significant gaps in the reentry program participants' experience but did not completely prepare them for the real-world challenges. In the real world, sometimes it does not matter if you have the requisite skills for a job. The legal obstacles to ex-offender employment were extensive and proved to be confusing and frustrating (Harley, 2014). Study Participant 21 reported the following story.

…things I learned in prison. You should be working on rehabilitation. The trade I

took was office technology, learning Microsoft. When I came home, I cannot get

a job because of my background. I thought I could do it on my own…

Others had similar experiences. Their skills provided them successful careers

prior to incarceration but those same skills were unmarketable once they had a criminal

record. These individuals had prosocial role models who did not have experience with the

barriers to employment experienced by ex-offenders and therefore the available prosocial

role model strategy did not work for them. Like the study participants that lacked basic

skills for employment, the skilled study participants had not observed role models that

had overcome the legal barriers to employment.

The study participants adopted strategies that addressed the apparent issues with

criminal role models by avoiding these role models and learning prosocial skills.

However, these strategies failed because participants did not observe application of the

prosocial skills in real-world situations nor the subsequent outcomes. Also participants

were not provided with social motivation to replicate the model.

Finding 3: self-reliance conundrum. The theme of self-reliance was prevalent

throughout the interviews. Study Participant 11 said it directly. "I do not get too close to

others. I have trust issues. I am a people person but a loner at the same time." Self-

reliance is obviously important, but the study participants have all been incarcerated,

which has made their ability to conform to social expectations more difficult than before

incarceration. Avoiding recidivism is a difficult task, as is demonstrated by the 77% rate

of rearrests within five years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014). When the released

offenders believed they must/can avoid recidivism on their own, the odds were against them.

A prevalent objective was to obtain a job for income. A source of income was necessary to obtain food and housing for themselves and their families. Lack of skills and prosocial role models, along with the legal barriers to employment, made obtaining and retaining a job extremely challenging. Without the help of others, it was nearly impossible. The study participants expressed a frequent belief, that by using the skills obtained through the reentry program, they would be able to find and retain employment. Participants with successful careers prior to incarceration were not optimistic. Study Participant 14, the sole professional in the study, characterized himself as "desperate." The expectation of self-reliance inhibited the reentry program participants from forming cooperative relationships because they did not recognize the need. The participants did not value creating new cooperative relationships because none of the participants listed a cooperative relationship as the most important person in their life nor did any respond with crediting a cooperative relationship as critical to their success. Motivation to replicate modeled behavior is part of SLT. The study participants faced barriers that are difficult to overcome and resulted in failure. Cooperative relationships could have provided motivation after failure when self-motivation was weakest.

Research Question 2

Qualitative: How do the young adult offenders report their thoughts and feelings with regards to active participation in reentry programs?

Finding 1: Optimism turns to frustration. The theme of optimism about the future was common throughout the interviews. Participant 15 stated with confidence "I feel motivated, anything is possible." While their sense of optimism was encouraging, the realities of the real world were not overcome with optimism. Without a supportive community, the optimism turned into frustration when the new skills acquired at the reentry program were in-effective at overcoming the social barriers to the released offenders. Study Participant 14 at the end of the interview added "throughout this interview I expressed that I had high hopes but now I do not think they [reentry program] can help me. I hope they will." Study Participant 14 had a professional position before his incarceration. Upon release, he received rejections for every type of job. He has not established any relationships with released offenders like himself through the reentry program. His family support did not have a criminal background and could not offer real-world tested advice.

Study Participant 14 started his reentry journey confident that after his incarceration he would successfully reentry society. After a year and a half of unemployment, he was frustrated and had lost faith in the reentry program. He had tried many government agencies, like veteran's administration, unemployment office, etc., for help but had no success. Several participants expressed their journey from optimism to frustration. Like study Participant 14, each faced barriers they were not able to overcome.

The study participants were not all frustrated; many were genuinely optimistic about the future and grateful for the reentry program. However, unless the expectation for self-reliance is fulfilled, the optimistic study participants may become frustrated about the

outcome of the reentry program and revert to the role model that has provided illicit

quick money.

Finding 2: willingness to inform others about the reentry program. Many of

the study participants expressed their desire to inform others about the reentry program if

they were of the "right mind set." The study participants did not seek to change other's

viewpoints about the reentry program. They would openly discuss with people that asked

them about the reentry program, such as their friends and families. They did not respond

to interview questions in a way that was open to talking to people who held a different

belief. There was a consistent theme of avoidance of environmental influences. The study

participants did not interact with those individuals who were not ready for change.

The study participants behavior was not observable by the population that most

needed this positive role model. However, the study participants' responses have a theme

about the desire to inform others about the program. This willingness to inform others

about the reentry program should be used to systematically educate the population that

would benefit the most from the reentry programs. If the reentry program participants

understood the importance of role models of behavior and outcomes, along with social

motivation to follow the model, the reentry program participants may be willing to step

into the field of view of the population most in need. The reentry program participants

could become the role models and motivational support missing from the street culture.

<center>**Summary**</center>

The structured interviews were conducted at the reentry program facilities which

were familiar to the study participants. The structured interviews were audio recorded

and transcribed so that analysis could be completed. Data were coded and categorized.

The resulting themes were used to create findings for each of the research questions.

Research Question 1 was to identify themes from the responses that can provide insight

into avoiding, attrition, and completion of reentry programs. The findings are (a)

unawareness of reentry programs, (b) an inefficient learning approach, and (c) the self-

reliance conundrum.

Research Question 2 sought to understand the reentry program participants'

feelings and the thoughts about reentry programs. Two findings emerged: (a) the

unskilled reentry program participants were initially optimistic about the impact on their

lives, but skilled participants expressed frustration when expectations of employment

were unfulfilled; and (b) the participants were grateful for the information and skills

provided by the reentry program and willing to inform others about the reentry program.

These 5 findings are based on study participants' responses to the structured

interview with their thoughts, feelings and experiences. The findings provide insights to

the reentry program administrators about areas that can be improved to better retain

participants. Chapter 5 provides specific actions that can be taken to change reentry

programs to better meet the needs of the participants.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Previous studies indicated a high attrition rate from the reentry programs (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). High attrition rate degrades the effectiveness of the programs because completing the programs is a positive factor in avoiding recidivism (Latessa et al., 2015). Released offenders face challenges to employment, housing, and access to prosocial role models (Ginner Hau & Smedler, 2011; Grommon et al., 2013; James et al., 2015; Kroner & Takahashi, 2012; Latessa et al., 2015; Naccarato et al., 2013). In the present study, I collected data from reentry program participants to gain their point of view in a grounded theory qualitative study. The purpose of the study was to develop themes to better understand the reasons for the high attrition rates from reentry programs.

This qualitative study included data collected from reentry program participants to develop the following findings for Research Question 1:

1. Unaware of reentry programs: The study participants were unaware of the availability and the potential benefits of reentry programs.

2. Inefficient learning approach: In the context of SLT, the criminal behavior contained all the steps for social learning while the reentry program did not.

3. Self-reliance conundrum: The study participants were focused on supporting their families using their own skills. However, skilled study participants were not able to overcome the barriers to reentry imposed by society. The expectation of self-reliance may inhibit the reentry program participants from

forming cooperative relationships because of the belief that they can learn a skill and get a job on their own.

The following findings were used to answer Research Question 2:

1. Optimism turns to frustration: The study participants expressed great optimism that the skills they were learning would enable them to find a job and be self-sufficient. However, those with skills were becoming frustrated as they were unable to overcome barriers to reentry. This was troubling because SLT requires motivation to replicate the learned behavior. The study participants were relying on self-motivation rather than external motivation from a support group.

2. Willingness to inform others about the reentry program: The study participants expressed their desire to inform others about the reentry program provided they were of the right mind-set. The reentry program participants could become the role models and motivational support missing in the reentry process.

These findings may provide reentry program administrators information to develop approaches to modify their reentry programs to better serve the needs of the participants.

Interpretation of Findings

In the literature review, I summarized knowledge about mass incarceration, the penal system tenet of the individual is solely responsible for his criminal behavior and subsequent desisting from criminal behavior upon release, and barriers to integration into society. For this study, I explored the reentry programs in the Baltimore region and saw

firsthand the evidence of the mass incarceration. I had no difficulties finding numerous reentry programs and released offenders. The study participants reported the prevalence of illegal behavior and the culture surrounding the illegal behavior during their interviews. Through the structured interviews, the study participants reported experiences that confirmed the extent of mass incarceration.

The literature indicated high attrition rates from reentry programs. I experienced firsthand the attrition from reentry programs. I had volunteers schedule a time to be interviewed, and before we could meet for the interview, these volunteers had been arrested. If the reentry program participants are arrested and incarcerated, they are unable to complete the reentry program and use the prosocial skills learned. This experience was consistent with the literature indicating that attrition from reentry programs was common.

Central to the penal system is the tenet of individual responsibility for criminal behavior, which requires the offender to take sole responsibility for his or her behavior. Study participants had an expectation of self-reliance for themselves and others. The finding of the self-reliance conundrum showed that the reentry program participants believe that they can avoid recidivism because they are ready to change. The study participants further believed that other released offenders who avoid the reentry program are not ready to change. Reentry program participants did not try to encourage those not ready for change to participate in the reentry program. Rather, the reentry program participants did not interact with those not ready for change. This echoed the methods used by the penal system. The penal system encourages individual responsibility of the inmates. This helps to ensure that if an inmate does not follow the rule, he or she will be

held accountable. The analysis of the study data indicated that individual responsibility extends beyond incarceration. The released offenders continue to follow the individual responsibility paradigm after release and apply that value to their peers.

Consistent with the literature review, the legal obstacles to reentry reported by study participants were extensive and can be confusing and frustrating. Most of the study participants believed that if they learned what the reentry program was advocating, they would be able to accomplish their goals on their own. However, those reentry program participants who had the skills to perform professional jobs prior to incarceration were unable to obtain a job because of societal barriers. Although study participants may control their own behavior, society has created barriers that may be difficult for released offenders to overcome solely on learned skills.

Limitations of the Study

Analysis of the qualitative data provided themes regarding the thoughts and feelings of reentry program participants who volunteered for this study. The findings were not generalizable to any population. The survey data provided information about the sample population; however, the scope of the study did not include a representative sample. The study participants provided their thoughts and feelings in responses to open-ended questions. The data collected indicated variability in the participants' viewpoints. Coding and convergence of data revealed nine themes to answer two research questions. The responses to closed survey questions were not validated, and some of the responses were vague and not quantifiable. The survey responses were categorized, but survey data were not used to prioritize by frequency and none of the responses were excluded from

the analysis. All data were collected from reentry programs located in the Baltimore, MD

region. Similar studies in other geographical regions may produce different findings.

Recommendations

The ability of the reentry programs to better incorporate SLT to prevent

recidivism could be further investigated. The themes developed from the data collected

during the interviews supported the theory that criminal behavior had the stages of SLT

while the reentry programs did not. A study of reentry programs could be conducted to

identify reentry programs that are grounded in SLT. If an SLT-grounded program is

found, a replication of this qualitative study could be conducted to determine the themes

of this reentry program's participants. Unlike the present study, this proposed study could

indicate themes that reflect an effective learning program grounded in SLT. Themes that

may be indicative of an effective learning program are the awareness of the reentry

program by the target population of released offenders, the recruiting of new reentry

program participants from the target population, and willingness to model behavior

through engagement with the target population.

If the proposed study does indicate effective learning grounded in SLT, then

further quantitative studies could be conducted to characterize the effectiveness of the

program with regard to retention of participants and recidivism. Further, a quantitative

study could be conducted to test the theory that a reentry program grounded in SLT is

effective in improving the awareness of the target population about the reentry program,

at informing the target population about reentry programs, and at recruiting individuals to

the reentry program who are not necessarily of the right mind-set. These studies would

provide an evidence-based evaluation of an SLT-grounded reentry program.

Implications

Reduction in recidivism rates have been demonstrated for released offenders who

complete reentry programs. The present study provided specific findings for reentry

program administrators to use that may improve the retention in their reentry program

and thereby lower recidivism rates. The study sample of released offenders was unaware

of the availability and benefits of the reentry programs. The reentry programs have been

ineffective about informing the target population about their benefits. Reentry program

administrators face a barrier of the reentry program participants not modeling behavior to

peers who are not interested in ceasing criminal behavior. The first step in the SLT

approach is awareness of the model. The target population of released offenders must be

made aware of the availability of the reentry programs and be convinced that completing

a reentry program is essential for every released offender. Reentry program

administrators may focus on informing the target population of released offenders about

the availability and benefits of the reentry program.

The analysis of the learning process experienced by the study participants yielded

interesting findings. The analysis included SLT as a model. The study participants

reported their experiences, which included the alternative to the reentry programs of

street life of criminal behavior. The data indicated that street life is using the SLT model

effectively whereas the reentry programs are ineffective at all SLT learning stages.

Although SLT is not the only way people learn, the high recidivism rate experienced by

released offenders suggests that the street life learning process is more effective than the alternative.

The learning process used by the reentry programs must be more effective than the street life learning process. The reentry program administrators who focus on cognitive skills are providing useful skills to the participants. However, if the participant does not know how to use the skills effectively in the real world to obtain the predicted outcomes, the participant could become frustrated and revert to criminal behavior. Training participants to develop prosocial skills is necessary, but reentry program participants also require observing the model application of prosocial skills in the real world. This enables the reentry program participant to understand how to apply the skills and the realistic outcomes to expect.

Many study participants believed that they could, with the right skills, desist from criminal behavior on their own. Predicting recidivism for individuals is difficult, but the overall rate of recidivism predicts that three out of four released offenders will recidivate (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014). These statistics suggest that it is very difficult to avoid recidivism using the existing approaches. Many of the study participants were optimistic about their future, but few had marketable skills and firsthand experience with the difficulty of reentry. These participants were optimistic early in their reentry, but that optimism gave way to frustration after being rejected for jobs they felt qualified to do. After trying on their own, they were now trying the reentry program in the hope that the program would be able to help them. This belief that self-reliance is sufficient to

overcome social barriers to reentry may be addressed in the change to an SLT-grounded reentry program.

Real-world modeling, awareness of the modeled behavior, retention of the knowledge, and practicing of prosocial skills are the first four steps of SLT; the next step is motivation to independently replicate the skill to obtain the desired outcome (Akers, 2013). Motivation can be both internal and external (Bandura, 1971). The study participants expressed a primary desire for self-reliance. Self-reliance is based on internal motivation. They want to get a job to obtain the money needed to care for their families. However, having the skill is not enough to overcome the social barriers to employment for released offenders. The social barriers can cause skilled released offenders to be rejected for jobs they are otherwise qualified to perform (Harley, 2014). Rejection is never easy and can lead to frustration with the failure of the skills to produce the expected outcome. External motivation can supplement internal motivation during the periods of frustration. External motivation can help by providing constructive feedback on performance, encouragement to continue, and help to meet basic needs (Wnuk et al., 2013). Reentry program administrators can help facilitate the external motivation as part of the reentry program grounded in SLT.

The study participants reported the value of the reentry program to improving their outlook on life by providing prosocial skills. Many of the skills provided by the reentry program were not available to the study participants elsewhere. The study participants were grateful and willing to inform others about the reentry program. They believed in the program and its potential to help them achieve their individual goals.

Reentry program administrators can use this expressed desire as a foundation to use the reentry program participants to model behavior to the target population.

By using the findings of the present study, reentry program administrators can improve their programs to reduce attrition and improve the outcomes for the target population of released offenders. These improvements may benefit both the released offender and the community. Released offenders may be better equipped to meet the needs of their families without resorting to illicit behavior. The community may benefit from the prosocial models of the reentry program participants.

Conclusions

The United States has the world's largest incarcerated population (Carson, 2015). Political efforts to reduce the incarcerated population and fulfillment of sentences will increase the rate of release of offenders from the penal system (Hamilton et al., 2015; St. John, 2014). If current recidivism rates are not reduced, at least 77% of the released offenders will recidivate within 5 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014).

Findings from this study indicated that reentry program administrators can focus on specific areas to improve the reentry programs by changing their programs to become grounded in SLT. The criminal behavior has effectively implemented SLT while the reentry program has not. Through implementation of SLT in the reentry program, criminal behavior will be an alternative to the reentry program rather than the only effective observable model. This may reduce attrition from reentry programs and may increase the capacity of existing reentry programs to support the predicted increase in released offenders.

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Appendix: Structured Interview Outline

Interview Outline

Recruitment of participants is by the researcher announcing the search for volunteers. The announcement is as follows:

I, Roe Taylor, a PhD candidate, am collecting research data from reentry participants to complete my PhD dissertation. The study is to collect reentry participants' thoughts about the fulfillment of your expectations about the reentry program. I am not associated with the reentry program and participation is voluntary. The information collected is confidential and will not positively or negatively impact your compliance with the reentry program. Eligible participants have attended up to 8 sessions and are 21 - 30 years old. The recorded interviews will last 45 minutes and will be conducted here at the reentry program site after a meeting. The whole process will take less than one hour. Please contact me via text or voice mail, provided on the flyer, if you would like to volunteer.

Introduction

Good afternoon, *participant's name*. My name is Roe Taylor. I am a PhD candidate with Walden University. You may call me Ms. Taylor. How would you like me to address you? *Repeat name.* Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. We are here today to discuss your thoughts around the reentry program. This study is not part of the reentry program and your participation is voluntary. I will not use your name in any reports. Your participation will be confidential. I will <u>not</u> ask you any questions that could incriminate you in any legal settings. Please do not self-disclose any illegal

activities. When we start the interview process, I will begin an audio recording to allow me to collect your words accurately. I will ask you a series of questions, at the beginning about your history, then about your thoughts regarding the reentry program. Then we will be done. Before we begin, I will go through this consent form that acknowledges you understand your rights and your participation is voluntary. You may ask me any questions about the consent form. Please be aware that you may stop the interview at any time and withdraw your consent to participate.

After obtaining the signature of the participant, begin the interview.

Interview

My research is based on Social Learning Theory that contends that much learning occurs by observing other's behavior, becoming knowledgeable about their behavior, practicing the observed behavior to become proficient at the behavior, and finally being motivated to replicate the modeled behavior. The behavior we will be discussing today is participating in the reentry program. The goal of the study is to determine why so many participants do not complete most reentry programs. Maybe if this study can understand, from your view point, your thoughts about attending a reentry program, the programs can be made to better serve reentry participants' needs. Do you have any questions for me? May we begin?

After receiving a positive verbal response.

At this point, may I turn on the recording device?

After receiving a positive verbal response, turn on the recording device.

Announce the beginning of the interview.

Interview ## on MM/DD/YYYY at XX:XX pm.

What is your educational background?

What is your employment history? Are you currently employed?

When were you released?

How long were you incarcerated?

Is this your first incarceration? If no...How many times have you been incarcerated?

Have you ever participated in drug rehabilitation program? If yes...How many times? When was the last time?

How many peers or friends do you have? How frequently do you see them? Daily, weekly, monthly, or seldom.

How many family members do you have? How frequently do you see them? Daily, weekly, monthly, or seldom.

Do you have other associations such as church or other group outside of the reentry program?

Who is the one most important person in your life?

This is the end of the questions related to your background. The following questions delve into your experiences related to the reentry program. I will encourage you to provide detailed answers by asking follow-up questions. There are no right or wrong answers, I am only interested in your experiences and feelings. Please do not talk about any illegal activities or prohibited activities. Do you have any questions about the interview? You may stop the interview at any point. Are you ready to start?

After answering questions and receiving an affirmative response, begin the structured interview.

Please think back to the last few days before you were released from incarceration. What were your expectations about your life immediately after release? *Follow up questions as appropriate:* What did you want to do? Who did you want to see? Were there things that you wanted to avoid?

Why did you enroll in the reentry program? *Follow up questions as appropriate:* Where did you find out about the program? What did you know about the programs?

Before you began this program, what were your expectations about the program and its impact on your life?

Before you enrolled in this program, please describe your friends' reaction to reentry programs?

What about your family? Please describe your family's reaction to you participating in the reentry program?

Were there others that told you their thoughts about you participating in the reentry program? What were their thoughts?

Did you know or hear about others that participated in any reentry programs? If yes, what were your thoughts about them participating in a reentry program? How did the reentry program work out for them?

Now that you have been participating for a little while, how do you feel about this program? What is the one thing that you were absolutely right about with regards to your

expectations for this program? What is the one thing you were absolutely wrong about with regards to your expectations for this program?

What do you think about the other participants in the reentry program?

What do you think about the facilitators?

Do you have a best friend that participates in this program? Why do you consider him a best friend?

Do you volunteer for additional tasks for the reentry group? Why do/don't you volunteer to do additional tasks for the group?

Do you tell others outside of the reentry group about your experiences in the reentry program? Why do/don't you share your experiences?

What are some of the things that would prevent you from attending a reentry program meeting?

What are some things that you do not do because you need to attend a reentry meeting?

Describe how you feel as you prepare to come to a reentry group meeting.

Describe how you feel as you travel home from a reentry group meeting.

How do you reward yourself when you have made a good decision?

What do you enjoy doing?

Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your thoughts about the reentry program?

Announce the end of the interview.

This concludes the Interview ## on MM/DD/YYYY at XX:XX pm.

Stop the recording device.

Conclusion of the Interview

Thank you for participating. Your experiences and thoughts have been very helpful. I wish you all the best in your reentry process.

Once the participant has left, I document observations in the note book. Observations include whether the participant and his reference responded in similar manner, the body language of the participant before, during, and after the interview, any lessons learned about the interview questions or venue, and finally saving the recording to a unique file, send the file to my email address for data retention and sending a copy of the file out for transcription.