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African American Male Ex-Offenders' Perceptions of a Reentry Program's Impact on Recidivating

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Walden University
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Abstract

African American Male Ex-Offenders' Perceptions of a Reentry Program's Impact on

Recidivating

by

Latoya R. Burt

MA, Kaplan University, 2015

BA, North Carolina Central University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

November 2018

Abstract

African American male ex-offenders struggle with lack of assistance during their transition from incarceration, and they encounter many barriers when released back into the community. The purpose of my general qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year. The theoretical framework included labeling theory, social disorganization theory, and social learning theory. The population consisted of 60 African American male ex-offenders intake participants of a reentry program that all completed the Client Satisfaction Survey. A purposive random sampling method was used to select ten participants for in-depth interviews. Data were collected through responses on the Client Satisfaction Survey and qualitative interviews. The research question was addressed through inductive coding and thematic analysis. The findings indicated that the reentry program enhanced participants' well-being, improved their communication, and increased their resourcefulness. Findings may be used to develop and improve reentry programs to promote better reentry outcomes and safer communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the late Hassie Mae Morris, my grandmother, my best friend. Her unconditional love and wisdom have kept me grounded over the years. I often think back over my life on how she always was there for me when I needed her the most and believed in me when I did not believe in myself. She was the true definition of a virtuous woman of God and a woman of grace. Isaiah 54:17 states, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." This was her favorite scripture from the Bible that she lived by every day. I can not thank her enough for how she was a blessing in my life and for what she instilled in me from a little girl into now a young lady. As I spent days, nights, and countless hours writing my dissertation, I could often hear her voice saying, "Now Toya Burke go on baby when you put your mind to something, you do it." I am forever thankful for the time God allowed her in my life, for giving her to me for 27 years, and not a day goes by that I do not think of her and miss her. Grandma, I hope I have made you proud! I love you, and you will forever live in my heart!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The transition from confinement to freedom is an adjustment for African American male ex-offenders, who spend a significant amount of time behind bars only to find that they are unprepared for life on the outside. Studies indicated that African American male ex-offenders are plagued with the lack of assistance to help with their transition, and they encounter many barriers when released back into the community (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017). Some of the barriers stem from the lack of finances, parental guidance, values, morals, and self-esteem (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017). African American male ex-offenders are likely to return to prison for committing the same crime, a new crime, or violating probation or parole (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017).

The cycle of incarceration and reentry is a battle that African American male ex-offenders face as a result of their exposure to the many social and economic disadvantages within their communities. African American male ex-offenders, their family, friends, and communities are all affected by these barriers as a part of the reentry process. For some, reentry is a moment of eager anticipation; for others, it elicits a sense of fear for the public's safety.

Once African American male ex-offenders reenter the community, they are faced with the arduous task of what to do next. It is important for African American male ex-offenders to understand how their actions before incarceration and after incarceration impact themselves and others.

In 2006, approximately 700,000 prisoners were being released from federal and state correctional facilities, which quadrupled since 1975 (Visher, et al., 2017). Some

individuals transition back into the community is more challenging than others (Visher & Travis, 2003). Exploring a reentry citizen's personal experience may lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the success or failure of prisoner reentry. Most studies on prisoner reentry addressed recidivism but failed to address the factors that are attributed to recidivism (Visher & Travis, 2003). After release, prisoners experience difficulties with the reentry process, whether they are placed on probation or parole (Visher & Travis, 2003). My study addressed ex-offenders' perceptions of reentry programs impact on their likelihood of recidivating.

In the United States, approximately 400,000 African American men are currently serving time in a prison or jail (Carson, 2018). Also, 13% of African American men in their 20s and 30s are currently incarcerated (Carson, 2018). Carson (2018) found that African American men ages 20 to 39, make up 25% of the incarcerated population. J.G. Miller (1996) noted that 44% to 47% of African American men were arrested for violent crimes, compared their White counterparts, who constituted about 50% to 54% of violent crime arrests. Conversely, Tonry (2011) claimed that despite the high arrest rates for violent crimes, African American men on constituted 45% of all arrests. Since the 1980's, this trend has remained consistent, which suggests that the increase of overall arrest rates of all crimes is due to the severity of the punishment, not the violent crime itself.

In Chapter 1, I present the background of the study as it relates to reentry and African American male ex-offenders. I also included the problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, limitations of the study, and implications for social change. I

conclude with the definition of terms, theoretical foundation, nature of the study, and the significance of the study.

Background of the Study

African American male ex-offenders face problems after incarceration. Cerda et. al (2014) suggested to the importance of exploring all possible barriers because to better prepare African American male ex-offenders for a successful transition back into the community. Curtis et. al (2013) found that education and employment opportunities posed barriers for African American men following incarceration. Chamberlain (2012) noted that low education levels affect employment opportunities. Also, the ability to obtain education and employment opportunities after incarceration is a tool that can prevent recidivism (Hall, 2015). However, African American male ex-offenders' criminal past is a barrier to education and employment risks.

Kubrin and Stewart (2006) observe that, when African American male ex-offenders return home after prison, they face barriers they face such as finding employment, housing, and transportation; obtaining resources for treatments; and obeying the rules of supervision. Research indicated that more African American male ex-offenders exit incarceration with social and medical problems than any other issues (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). Nally et al. (2013) indicated that without the basic needs of life addressed, African American male ex-offenders would face some barriers and most often recidivate. To reduce recidivism, African American male ex-offenders have to set personal goals and reach them during their reentry process. According to Hall (2015), understanding each barrier separately will create a clearer picture of the significance of

recidivism. Likelihood of recidivating for African American male ex-offenders is hard to determine because the barriers vary depending on the individual.

Tyler and Brockmann (2017) found that African American male ex-offenders who return home after incarceration are stigmatized by the community and face the setbacks of a criminal record. Plante (2015) found that African American male ex-offenders are often stigmatized after incarceration because they miss out on life milestones (e.g., education, employment, marriage) while incarcerated. Also, African American male ex-offenders often lack the skills needed to obtain certificates and licensures for job opportunities after incarceration. Without the certificates and licensures, African American male ex-offenders will not eligible for that certain jobs. Policies that disqualify those with certain criminal backgrounds is another barrier that hinders employment.

Research has shown that African American male ex-offenders are more likely to live in poverty after incarceration than their White counterparts (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017). Plante (2015) added that the neighborhoods African American male ex-offenders return to, tend to be improvised and low income. Also, the community can be a barrier for African American male ex-offenders after incarceration because of the label *'incarcerated individual'* (Plante, 2015). Morenoff and David (2014) recognized that African American male ex-offenders who return to these neighborhoods have lower levels of social control and are likely to re-offend because of their exposure. Sometimes African American male ex-offenders will move to find stability; however, this makes it difficult to secure and nurture healthy social relationships (Plante, 2015).

Problem Statement

The problem was a lack of knowledge African American male ex-offenders' experiences in reentry programs regarding their likelihood to recidivate within one year. Victoria et al. (2007) described prisoner reentry as a transitioning process from prison or jail back to the community. After incarceration, some African American male ex-offenders will be rearrested and returned to incarceration because of their lack of motivation and determination to accept the resources offered to them (Curtis, et al., 2013).

Dean (2014) addressed the relationship between the intake case manager and the intake participant, the lack of understanding of how the reentry program assists in advancing the educational opportunities for African American male ex-offenders, and the impact of reentry programs on interpersonal relationships and social networking skills of African American male ex-offenders. The current study addressed African American male ex-offenders' perceptions of participation in a reentry program after incarceration. Some of these men were incarcerated for years, participated in a reentry program, and still struggle to survive. Cerda et. al (2014) recommended the investigation of barriers African American male ex-offenders encounter after incarceration. Case and Fasenfest (2004) noted that successful reentry depends on the African American male ex-offenders' ability to find employment and housing, reestablish familial bonds, and become a productive citizen.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year. Data collection included qualitative interviews and a survey (see Appendix A). Case and Fasenfest (2004) discussed how after incarceration, African American male ex-offenders have a difficult establishing social connections to their community and finding available resources. My general qualitative study was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions African American male ex-offenders on their participation in a reentry program.

Findings may be used to provide suggestions for improvement, of the reentry program. The participation of African American male ex-offenders in the reentry program may mitigate potential challenges of recidivism (Case & Fasenfest, 2004). The hope for my study is to provide a foundation for other reentry programs.

Research Question

My general qualitative study was guided by the following research question: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year?

Theoretical Framework

My general qualitative study was founded on three theories to explore African American male ex-offenders' perceptions of whether participating in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year. The three theories were (1) labeling theory, (2) social disorganization theory and (3) social learning theory. Becker's

(1963) labeling theory provided important information about how individuals are stigmatized. This theory is appropriate for my study because the African American male ex-offenders are the individuals who are labeled because of incarceration. Berk (2015) found that individuals notice how they are treated unfairly based on their interactions with others in the community. Also, the deviant behaviors of individuals do not matter because they are still going to be labeled regardless (Berk, 2015).

The second theory used in my study was Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganization theory. Social disorganization theory provides a lens to examine my study of crime in communities and why criminal activities exist. Smith (2013) explained many criminologist and theorists explained how the community plays a role in the development and continuation of the African American male ex-offenders' offense. When the African American male ex-offenders exit incarceration, they sometimes return to impoverished and deteriorating communities in which crimes rates are still on the rise (Smith, 2013). This theory provided an understanding of how the communities impact the chances of recidivism. The significance of this information understands the experiences African American male ex-offenders endure during the reentry process.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory was also essential for my study. Social learning theory is helpful in knowing how people learn by observing others and imitating what they see. Some African American male ex-offenders are surrounded by other African American male ex-offenders. All three theories were useful in exploring barriers African American male ex-offenders face after incarceration when participating in a reentry program after incarceration.

Nature of the Study

I employed a general qualitative design that includes a case study and phenomenological methods. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) characterized a general qualitative design as a way to inquire and interpret participants perceptions and experiences about a practical problem. The qualitative approach is the appropriate method to use to collect purposeful data for my study (Qualitative Research Methods, n.d.). Applying qualitative methodology can generate essential discoveries during my study regarding identify each African American male ex-offenders' personal experiences of the barriers they face after release from incarceration (see Qualitative Research Methods, n.d.). Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained the importance of phenomenological research methods and how they used to obtain detailed descriptions. Also, Moustakas (1994) noted that reflective structural analysis is a way to represent the experiences of others. Interview data were analyzed for codes and themes, and findings may be used to promote possible improvements in the reentry program.

Definitions

I used the following definitions of key terms in my study:

Barriers: Obstacles African American male ex-offenders encounter after incarceration when attempting to reenter an unstable community (Rapheal, 2011).

Ex-Offenders: African American men who reintegrate back into the community after being incarcerated with criminal convictions on their criminal background (LeBel, Richie & Maruna, 2017).

Prisoner reentry: A transitioning process from prison or jail back to the community (Victoria et al., 2007).

Recidivism: The likelihood that African American male ex-offenders will revert to engaging in criminal activities one year after release (Stahler, et al. 2013).

Urban community: In urban communities, the crime rates are higher, low-income homes, the individuals are poverty-stricken (Muhammad, 2010).

Assumptions

The first assumption was that the African America male ex-offenders understood the survey (see Appendix A) and responded with the most truthful, honest, and accurate answers. The second assumption was that the reentry program would be willing to consider the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding their participation in the reentry program whether it impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year.

Scope and Delimitations

My study included an interview and survey (see Appendix A) that explored the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding whether participating in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year. The survey (see Appendix A) was formatted in a Word document, and the participants were sent this form via U.S. postal mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope for the participants to mail back to me. Also, the participants had a chance to look at the questions prior to the interviews being recorded and transcribed. My general qualitative study focused on African American male ex-offenders who were previous clients and current clients of the

reentry program. African American male ex-offenders were the only individuals invited to participate in my study. The rationale was this particular group of individuals has a higher incarceration rate than any other racial group (Smith, 2013). My study excluded other female ex-offenders and ex-offenders of a different race other than African American. There is a possibility that my study can be used for program improvements.

Limitations

My study had several limitations. First, the sample population was limited to one specific ethnic group and gender. Next, findings may have been influenced by participants nervousness or fearfulness when answering the interview and survey questions. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to not respond to any survey questions that made them feel uneasy. During the qualitative interviews, I chose to use structured questions, so participants were not able to go into detail about their perceptions of whether participating in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year. In addition, the questions were tailored to the African American male ex-offender population.

Significance

The significance of my study was to understand the lived experiences of African American male ex-offenders regarding their likelihood of recidivating within one after participating in a reentry program. Findings may be used to suggest improvements in the reentry program. Data collection included a survey (see Appendix A) and structured interviews. This approach allowed for themes to emerge during the qualitative interviews to gain knowledge about why African American male ex-offenders feel the way they do.

Findings may contribute to the body of knowledge in the criminal justice literature as it relates to African American male ex-offenders' reentry following incarceration.

There has been research on reentry and the perceptions about their participation in a reentry program (Bender et al., 2016). However, there was a need to examine African American male ex-offenders' perceptions of reentry programs effectiveness in aiding their transition back into the community. This qualitative research study filled gaps in the literature regarding how the reentry program may improve its services based on the perceptions of the African American male ex-offender participants. My study also addressed the gap in knowledge regarding how the relationship between the intake case manager and the intake participant (see Dean, 2014). Dean (2014) noted lack of understanding of how the reentry programs assist in advancing the educational opportunities for African American male ex-offenders. Dean (2014) also observed a gap in understanding the impact reentry programs on African American male ex-offenders' interpersonal relationships and social networking skills. My study contributed to making a difference for the reentry program in North Carolina. The results of my study brought awareness to the reentry program and the perceptions shared by the African American male ex-offenders.

Summary

The perceptions of African American male ex-offenders may expand the knowledge about what can be changed within a reentry program. Barriers African American male ex-offenders face after incarceration cause challenges for reentry. Absence of support from the reentry program staff may create improvement an additional

barrier. It is important for the reentry staff to examine the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders about the reentry program, which may promote changes to ensure these men have a successful transition back into the community. Chapter 2 provides an extensive literature review from historical and contemporary viewpoints.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

At the time of my study, it was unclear whether African American male ex-offenders' participation in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year. R. J. Miller (2013) found that in the 1870s when African American male ex-offenders left prison, the correctional officers were responsible for finding reentry programs in the community. This process was completed through employment opportunities inside of prisons and inside community-based programs known to assist African American male ex-offenders with their reentry back into the community (Foucault, 1977). The purpose of the current study was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year.

Following incarceration, African American male ex-offenders face barriers during their transition back into the community. It is important for communities to offer these returning citizens resources to help them to overcome these barriers (Western et al., 2014). According to Western et al. (2014) the barriers that may arise include employment, housing, transportation, education, and family connections. Western et al. (2014) also noted that returning citizens are unemployed, receive public support, and majority depends on female relatives to help them financially and to provide housing. Western et al. (2014) noted that some returning prisoners have substance abuse problems and mental illnesses, which may impact their emotional well-being. African American male ex-offenders are responsible for the success of their reentry and for being proactive with using the resources offered.

Chapter 2 presents an analysis of theories on African American male ex-offenders, the barriers faced, and the different reentry processes. This literature review includes prior studies that addressed the reentry barriers, resources offered, laws implemented, and successful reentry programs. This literature review is organized into sections that include the theories used in my study. Studies have addressed components that may trigger an ex-offender to recidivate and the importance of providing resources to mitigate the risk. In addition, this literature review includes numerous opportunities that can be provided to ensure these men are successful during reentry. Oluwaniyi (2017) noted the importance of addressing the barriers African American men face after incarceration. This chapter concludes with a summary of the literature and the implications of the study.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review included sources such as peer-reviewed journals; books; government, state, and federal websites; and dissertations. The search strategies yielded over 180 articles, of which 130 were relevant to the topic. The articles used for this literature review were accessed through Google Scholar and Walden University library databases. Key words used in the literature searches included *African American, barriers, black, challenges, community-based programs, ex-convict, ex-criminal, ex-felon, ex-offender, ex-prisoner, faith-based programs, male, men, non-profit, non-profit organizations, non-violent crimes, non-violent offenders, non-violent, recidivate, recidivis*, recidivism, reenter, reentry, reentry programs, rehabilitation, and risk assessment.*

Theoretical Foundation

The three theories used in my study were labeling, social disorganization, and social learning. Each theory contributed to an understanding of perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding their participation in a reentry program and their likelihood to recidivate after one year. Bowman and Travis (2012) asserted that the community has the power to help African American male ex-offenders overcome their barriers. When the community provides programs and resources, then recidivism can be mitigated. It is important for the community to offer African American male ex-offenders different resources to assist in successful assimilation back into the community. In addition, it is essential for the community stakeholders to know about the resources they offer and how they are applied to the population of African American male ex-offenders. Bowman and Travis (2012) noted that African American male ex-offenders should have a welcoming experience in the community, including somewhere to stay, so they can pursue educational goals, employment, social skill development, and emotional stability.

Labeling Theory

Labeling theory was created in the 1960's as an explanation for the cause of deviance (Berk, 2015). Berk (2015) stated that, although ex-offender served their time when reentering society, they are labeled. Labeling hinders them from gaining employment or securing housing. All offenders are labeled no matter the nature of the crime. Berk (2017) implied that labeling of ex-offenders, despite their crime, has detrimental effects on their lives and their interactions in the community. Berk (2015) discovered that researchers who study deviance view it differently and this impacts how

they utilize deviance through their research. Berk (2015) found that research on labeling theory progresses, the perceptions and new ideologies are created.

Durkheim (as cited in Berk, 2015) stated that:dominant stream of influence has been this 'positivistic' perspective where (1) 'deviance' referred to norm-violating behavior, such as crime,delinquency, suicide, alcoholism, etc., and (2) research was oriented toward identifying the social causes or etiology of the norm-violating behavior as well as its consequences upon the larger community (p.150). Berk (2015) discussed how labeling theory shifted from focusing on deviance and the harm it causes to communities, to focus on the repercussion of placing labels on the lives of people who are labeled deviants by others in the community. Furthermore, Berk (2015) claimed individuals in the community can draw social criticism without breaking social patterns and still be labeled as deviants from this view. Berk (2015) insisted it is not the act the individual involves himself in but it is the reactions from the community that speaks deviance on them regardless of their behavior.

Deviance involves the disapproval, criticism, and dismissal by the community (Berk, 2015). Berk (2015) observed that current studies enhanced modern areas of research, such as gambling, victim viewpoints, and drug abuse. Previous researchers studied traditional and informal labeling, the circumstances in which labeling take place, the type of punishments enforced, the age of the individual labeled, the duration of labeling and the different effects labeling has on victims (Berk, 2015). Berk (2015) discovered more descriptions are needed to understand the various types of deviance,

punishment, and state in which labeling occurs Schur (1973) asserted that researchers fail to recognize why the person commits the crime.

Berk (2015) stated an individual is stigmatized no matter the type of deviant behavior. The more the individual encounters rejection from the community, the more overpowered they feel (Berk, 2015). Berk (2015) stated individuals who are viewed as normal in the community do not experience the effects of labeling. Berk (2015) purported criticism through social interactions in the community causes individual strife. The individual will be able to recognize the harsh treatment they are receiving based on the actions and reactions of others in the community (Berk, 2015).

Berk (2015) mentioned current research on labeling theory allows researchers to focus on specific issues and concerns about their study on deviance. Also, labeling theory grants researchers the ability to show the different relationships of deviance without interfering one another throughout my study (Berk, 2015). It is important researchers who are relating their study to the labeling theory can center their attention from others to the theory itself (Berk, 2015). Berk (2015) contends that society will still foster negative perceptions of these ex-offenders.

Labeling Theory Interaction With Current Study

Labeling theory impacted my study because it explained how others view African American male ex-offenders in the community. Berk (2015) found that regardless when African American male ex-offenders completed their incarceration sentences and returned to the community as a changed individual, the community will still label them based on their past criminal convictions.

Social Disorganization Theory

Shaw and McKay (as cited in Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003) discovered social disorganization theory as an attempt to explain why high crime rates continued to rise higher in Chicago neighborhoods regardless of the changes in the race within the communities. The findings suggested that the eco-friendly conditions of neighborhoods impact the rate of crime over the qualities each person in the neighborhood has (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). More important, Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) suggested social disorganization theory pinpoints the relationships between neighborhood configuration, social leadership, and crime. In sum, Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) postulates social disorganization theory places emphasis on communities with crime problems and strive to shift their focus to set similar goals to help solve these long-term crime problems.

Social disorganization theory explained that criminal activities are not the same in all areas (Kubrin, 2009). Kubrin (2009) stated that individuals could recognize what areas are good versus what areas are bad in which the cities they live. Kubrin (2009) implied social disorganization theory has continued to stand firm throughout the 21st century and remain in the thoughts of individuals who study crime.

Social disorganization theory provides an understanding of prisoner reentry based on each's characteristics (Davis, 2014). Davis (2014) mentioned social disorganization theory expands the view on local community ecological systems and the reentry of African American male ex-offenders back into in the community because this helps to explain crime within the neighborhoods in which they return. Rose and Clear (1998) acknowledge during the reentry process of African American male ex-offenders, social

disorganization theory plays an important role in explaining the dysfunctional and unorganized social circumstances. Davis (2014) stated when African American male ex-offenders exit correctional institutions and return to their disadvantaged communities; this is a sign of social disorganization (Davis, 2014). In sum, Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) proposed social disorganization theory not only focuses on crime but also the social ties, relationships, and control between the African American male ex-offenders.

Rose and Clear (1998) postulated that social disorganization theory creates assumptions about individual's choice to avoid high crime areas but instead lived in areas where they felt secure and safe (Rose & Clear, 1998). Davis (2014) implied that the residents in disadvantaged communities believe their communities were in these certain situations due to crime. Kubrin (2009) agreed it is important that crime problems are resolved within disadvantaged communities which will allow communities to become socially organized and lower crime rates to occur. Communities that are socially organized have the advantage to be free from crime and create positive social bonds (Kubrin, 2009). Kubrin (2009) mentioned it is harder on African American male ex-offenders to find stability in socially disorganized communities because it is difficult for them to interact and find trust in others. This is indicative of incarceration and warrants further research on the theoretical underpinnings and the proposed research question.

Davis (2014) stated that social disorganization theory is known throughout history. Davis (2014) believed when African American male ex-offenders return to their disadvantaged communities. Shaw and McKay (1942) noted that social disorganization theory provides researchers a better understanding of how different behaviors exist

between African American male ex-offenders who return to the communities and the individuals who already reside there. Davis (2014) noted these communities show poor common goals, values, and social controls, which leads to increase crime. Kubrin (2009) identified social disorganization theory continues to be researched to learn about crime and delinquency in disorganized communities.

Social Disorganization Theory Interaction With Current Study

Social disorganization theory impacted my study because it explained how African American male ex-offenders return to their dysfunctional communities after incarceration. Kubrin (2009) noted that after incarceration African American male ex-offenders are more likely to return to their communities surrounded by crime and violence.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's social learning theory postulates that people observe and imitate behaviors of others (Navabi, 2012). In addition, Navabi (2012) indicated social learning theory is based on the social interaction with others, and we learn how to communicate. Navabi (2012) contended social learning theory is a theory that expresses learning and development for researchers. Bandura concluded that by the observation of others, then people can learn new behaviors (Navabi, 2012).

Social learning theory is based on three main points: "(1) observation, (2) imitation, and (3) modeling" (Navabi, 2012, p.7). These three points are demonstrating that behaviors are learned without changes occurring (Navabi, 2012). Bandura (1965) found that some people can learn behaviors in different ways; while others can learn

behaviors through observation only. Navabi (2012) insisted that people observe others through all stages of life development. Essentially, social learning theory is learned from the observations of others and imitated.

Social learning theory can have a positive impact on African American male ex-offenders' reentry process (Caneda-Astray et al., 2011). Caneda-Astray et al. (2011) stated some prisons work closely within the community before African American male ex-offenders are released to ensure they have access to vocational training. Also, Caneda-Astray et al. (2011) discussed that training programs offered, are essential for the successful reentry of the prisoners because they offer mentoring programs to help with self-esteem and self-control. Prisoners who utilize resources offered while incarcerated are beneficial; this gives them the chance to reenter in the community without having the urge to re-offend.

Caneda-Astray et al. (2011) discussed it is important African American male ex-offenders receive the most support they can. It is important that prisoners are surrounded by positivity and inspiring role models while they are participating in training (Caneda-Astray et al., 2011). Essentially, once the prisoners are released back into the same communities, they have a greater risk of recidivism. The goals for the prisons that offer work release and training programs is that the prisoner's mindset is changed (Caneda-Astray et al., 2011). However, it is up to the prisoner and the African American male ex-offenders, once released, to want to apply what they have learned in prison and use it in the community.

Bandura mentioned that social learning theory is learning that can be detrimental to the lives of individuals who base their lives solely on what they learn and observe from others (Caneda-Astray et al., 2011). Caneda-Astray et al. (2011) acknowledge social learning theory helps others to understand the deviant behavior of prisoners and African American male ex-offenders while incarcerated and after incarceration, while in prison, prisoners can learn and observe new behaviors that will teach them how to sustain a non-criminal life after incarceration. In addition, social learning theory can have a positive impact on prisoners while incarcerated because of the various resources offered (Caneda-Astray et al., 2011). Prisoners can become affected by prison while they are incarcerated because of what they observe and learn from others who are also incarcerated.

Social Learning Theory Interaction With Current Study

Social Learning Theory impacted my study because after incarceration the African American male ex-offenders learn different resources that help them become self-sufficient. For example, Caneda-Astray et al. (2011) discovered that African American male ex-offenders have a positive experience after incarceration when learning from others and utilizing the resources provided.

The theories presented guided the current study and provided a foundation for examining the different stages of reentry.

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┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│ Labeling     │    │ Social       │    │ Social       │
│ Theory       │──▶ │ Disorgani-   │──▶ │ Learning     │
│ Becker 1963  │    │ zational     │    │ Theory       │
│              │    │ Theory Shaw  │    │ Bandura 1977 │
│              │    │ and McKay    │    │              │
│              │    │ 1942         │    │              │
└──────────────┘    └──────────────┘    └──────────────┘
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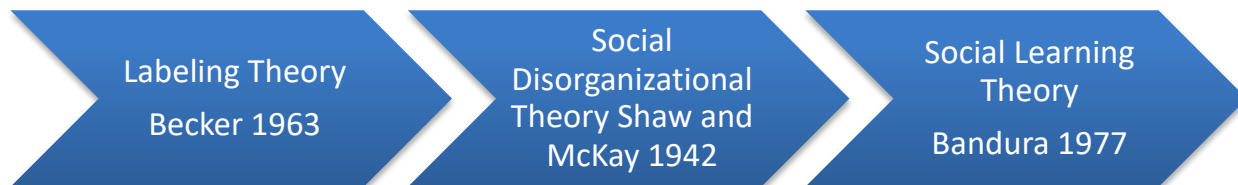
Figure 1: Process theory chart: Theoretical evolution.

Civil Rights Era

The Civil Rights Era is relevant to my study because it serves as the foundation of why, how, and when African Americans faced barriers after being incarcerated. Brown (2017) found throughout the Civil Rights period, African Americans were denied the right to vote and lost rights as citizens of the United States. They lost their property and forced into contracts (Brown, 2017). Palmiotto and Unnithan (2016) declared these unforeseeable situations were extreme and hateful for only African American. During the Civil Rights Era African Americans experienced hardships because of the color of their skin and not criminal records.

The community made it harder for African American male ex-offenders by placing a label to their name, such as felon, and taking away their rights as United States citizens (Brown, 2017). Brown (2017) discovered research has shown that African American male ex-offenders have it harder by being discriminated upon and denied employment in all areas and overall just treated unfairly. Brown (2017) mentioned

African American male ex-offenders have come in contact with the criminal justice system more often than any other race. Before release, African American male ex-offenders adopt negative thoughts about the criminal justice system and the community based on what they have already encountered while going through the process of being in confinement (Brown, 2017). Brown (2017) ascertains that African American male ex-offenders are a target in the community based on the color of their skin and their criminal past.

African American male ex-offenders can either be a felon or not a felon and still face the same barriers in the community (Brown, 2017). Despite their age, educational background, criminal history, finances, employment status, political choice and culture background there is still a high chance that African American male ex-offenders will encounter disenfranchisement and discrimination on all ends (Brown, 2017). Brown (2017) explained racism does impact how African American male ex-offenders can maneuver throughout the community and within their communities when seeking employment, housing, transportation or trying to pursue their education. These barriers cause African American male ex-offenders to view the criminal justice system negatively because of the interaction between them (Brown, 2017). Overall, Brown (2017) suggested when African American male ex-offenders are continuously denied their rights, this leads to distrust of the criminal justice system.

Once African American male ex-offenders enter back into the community, they are viewed as just a number (Brown, 2017). Brown (2017) contended African American male ex-offenders are not able to partake in different activities as a United States citizen.

When African American male ex-offenders are denied, frustration may occur, and this could result in them engaging in criminal activities. Overall, offering African American male ex-offenders' rights as a United States citizen and having civil privileges can help cut recidivism.

African American men do not necessarily commit more crimes than other races, but they are an overrepresented population (Brown, 2017). For instance, Alexander (2010) mentioned African American men are not only a victim of racial profiling and acts of discrimination, but they are mostly arrested for traffic violations and incarcerated. Also, African American men are also arrested due to the lack of resources offered in the community, low education academics and for their race/ethnicity (Brown, 2017). African American men seem not to trust the criminal justice system because of the negative encounters and stereotypes directed toward them (Brown, 2017). Brown (2017) suggested urban communities are heavily populated with police patrol and because of these African American men stand out.

Outlining Prisoner Reentry

R. J. Miller (2014) identified prisoner reentry as, "a welfare state–criminal justice hybrid institution that activates the universe of human service actors, criminal justice agencies, and policy and program planners to assist former prisoners to make their transition from prison to their home communities" (p.307). Throughout history, research has identified that several circumstances are linked to prisoner reentry (Pogrebin et al., 2014). The circumstances African American male ex-offenders face differs based on the communities in which they return. On the pathway to reentry, Pogrebin et al. (2014)

believed African American male ex-offenders need dependable resources to assist them in assimilating back into the community, to overcome economic and social barriers. Reentry barriers will rise if the communities lack in resources to assist living on the outside of prison. Many African American male ex-offenders find it impossible to reenter the community without facing any problems in the process.

Davis (2014) found that African American male ex-offenders' reentry depends on the community must offer supervision from the criminal justice system. More importantly, the care provided by the criminal justice system needs to continue throughout their reentry years to reduce recidivism (Davis, 2014). Davis (2014) shared correctional leaders and professionals have the important roles in the lives of African American male ex-offenders returning to the community. It is important for African American male ex-offenders to have some support from the criminal justice system after incarceration (Davis, 2014).

Pogrebin et al. (2014) mentioned as soon as African American male ex-offenders enter into community, the community views them as economic failures. African American male ex-offenders deal with this problem more than others. Also, African American male ex-offenders are competing against others who lack the same ability as them (Pogrebin et al., 2014). When one cannot succeed because of previous crimes committed this foreshadows any current future opportunities.

It has been found that African American male ex-offenders are more open to mentoring from other African American male ex-offenders because they can relate to each other (Lebel et al., 2015). For instance, African American male ex-offenders who

are just released will view other African American male ex-offenders as a positive example (Lebel et al., 2015). This influential guidance is a positive factor for the African American male ex-offenders because this can deter recidivism from occurring. Lebel et al. (2015) believed although it is impossible to determine who and will not recidivate, the community offers possible benefits that help the population of African American male ex-offenders. Certainly, African American male ex-offenders needing the guidance of other African American male ex-offenders are needed for a strong support system.

African American male ex-offenders have expressed their passion for guiding other African American male ex-offenders. Recent research has shown that African American male ex-offenders are happy to engage in helping others and being the role of a leader and life coach for them (Lebel et al., 2015). The wisdom and knowledge from African American male ex-offenders help others to heal from their past criminal history and deviant behavior (Lebel et al., 2015). Therefore, the abundance of support offered to many African American male ex-offenders is an illustration of positive rehabilitation.

Label et al. (2015) assured the many barriers African American male ex-offenders face deprives them of hope; thus, the community support and willingness to forgive is important to them. Equally important, African American male ex-offenders want to have a purpose and settle within the community as productive citizens (Label et al., 2015). This tactic is important for African American male ex-offenders to help them overcome their obstacles after incarceration and assimilate back into society.

When African American male ex-offenders feel that they have a sense of approval from the community, this motivates them to overcome barriers. Moreover, African

American male ex-offenders who want to have a smooth reentry back into the community look forward to a successful readjustment. Label et al. (2015) found between successful and unsuccessful African American male ex-offenders it is important for them to become engaged in mentorship, parenting skills and other activities that inspire them to give back to their community. Actively engaging in different community opportunities, African American male ex-offenders are positively exposed to what is important in life. Overall, this experience provides African American male ex-offenders a chance to see their importance in life.

The best way to understand reentry is to know that this is not a quick fix and warrants a holistic approach (Sipma-Dysico, 2013). Sipma-Dysico (2013) discussed it is impossible for reentry to have a solution to financial burdens, discrimination, unfairness, cost-effective housing, funding for education, family differences, confusion and discouragement from the men and women in the communities. Reentry is more of a survival mechanism to assist African American male ex-offenders to cope with incarceration (Sipma-Dysico, 2013). Furthermore, Sipma-Dysico (2013) believed African American male ex-offenders must find strategies on how to adapt to the disparity and defiance they face on a daily. The community can create methods to reduce hardship, adequate income, arrange equal educational opportunities, and dispute discrimination from all views (Sipma-Dysico, 2013).

Some African American male ex-offenders struggle more than others after incarceration due to different illnesses, such as mental illness and or substance abuse (White et al., 2012). African American male ex-offenders are also more likely to be less

educated, lack skills and family support before incarceration and after release (White et al., 2012). While incarcerated, African American male ex-offenders go through a set of transitional steps before entering the community. Essentially, corrections provide African American male ex-offenders with resources and strategies, such as a reentry program.

M. J. Miller (2014) stated some communities offer transition programs which aid African American male ex-offenders with their return back into the community better known as prisoner reentry. Also, prisoner reentry came into existence through the criminal justice, state and government organizations (Miller, 2014). R. J. Miller (2014) suggested current reentry services are offered to people of color in communities who have a low income and are poverty stricken. Also, M.J. Miller (2014) claimed reentry is a process that all African American male ex-offenders go through, but the difference between some African American male ex-offenders is whether or not they have a pleasant transition back into the community. Overall, the success of prisoner reentry depends on African American male ex-offenders.

R. J. Miller (2014) mentioned there is no guarantee if African American male ex-offenders will have a successful transition, but policymakers and stakeholders created strategies that assist African American male ex-offenders to re-enter society. In addition, policymakers and stakeholders have found that former prisoners who participate in reentry programs have a better chance at a successful transition than their counterparts (Miller, 2014). Also, after incarceration, some policymakers and stakeholders are spokespersons for African American male ex-offenders who encounter issues in their lives (Miller, 2014). Also, R. J. Miller (2014) itemized policymakers and stakeholders act

as social pantomimist within the social frame, which implements practices of prisoner reentry establishments and retain certain ways of the social world.

R. J. Miller (2014) found that African American male ex-offenders are more accepting to reentry programs when they are offered: ethical training, where they learn about discrimination, criminal background, hardship by grasping the concept of social situations, controlling their emotions, and expanding their decisions to make good choices. Upon completion of the program, African American male ex-offenders are rewarded with "certificates of program completion, case management services, and in some cases, even employment in prisoner reentry programs" (Miller, 2014, p.328). African American male ex-offenders become motivated when they hear and learn of other success stories from other African American male ex-offenders (Miller, 2014). Overall, reentry programs have the chance to help African American male ex-offenders change their lives for a long time to come.

Adair (2017) stated the path to freedom comes with barriers, hurdles and shortcomings for African American male ex-offenders after incarceration. Adair (2017) found that a few types of research have viewed reentry as some way African American male ex-offenders are overshadowed by the struggle to survive in life. After incarceration, African American male ex-offenders immediately face many barriers (Adair, 2017). Also, Adair (2017) found the communities have changed for African American male ex-offenders since first entering into incarceration. Prisoners are often released with the same clothes they were arrested in, some money, and expected to be successful in reentry.

Adair (2017) found that African American male ex-offenders find adapting to life outside prison, a daunting task. For example, "… using new technology, navigating public transportation, or shopping for groceries also present barriers" (Adair, 2017, p.7). Other barriers encountered by African American male ex-offenders are, adjusting to daily life and how to interact with the public (Adair, 2017). It is important African American male ex-offenders to know how to build relationships they have lost over time (Adair, 2017). Overall, returning to the community is a task for African American male ex-offenders and requires time for adjustment.

Adair (2017) believed that African American male ex-offenders are returning to the community, attempt to put their lives back together. For example, they are in search of stable housing (Adair, 2017). African American male ex-offenders are disqualified for public housing assistance, food assistance, government and federal assistance because of their felony convictions (Adair, 2017). Unfortunately, African American male ex-offenders end up homeless or recidivating (Adair, 2017).

African American male ex-offenders who were participants of a reentry program in Missouri, expressed how they believed they were viewed by their family and community (Adair, 2017). African American male ex-offenders expressed that their emotional connection is destroyed because of incarceration (Adair, 2017). Adair (2017) discovered that being in prison has taught some people to be violent and always ready to defend themselves. Once released, ex-offenders are challenged with showing affection towards the family (Adair, 2017). Most families are unaware of what the ex-offenders had experienced while incarcerated.

Adair, (2017) noted that being incarcerated does create barriers for the African American male ex-offenders due to the lack of social interactions. African American male ex-offenders are burden by what is expected of them after incarceration for them to have the approval from the community. In sum, African American male ex-offenders have to learn how to adapt to their community so they can fit in after incarceration.

Between the 1800's and 1900's, the rehabilitation was believed to be successful for prisoners (Phelps, 2011). For example, Phelps (2011) stated that -experienced professionals believed they could cure prisoners. Phelps (2011) mentioned that the prisoners were able to return to the community as law-abiding citizens. On the other hand, in the late 1970's, prisoner rehabilitation took a turn and correctional institutions presume it did not work (Phelps, 2011). However, there is proof that rehabilitation worked and there was a rise in recidivism during this time (Phelps, 2011).

Morgenstern and Larrauri (2013) believed that successful reentry for African American male ex-offenders requires their active participation in the community and supervised probation. On the other hand, Morgenstern and Larrauri (2013) suggested African American male ex-offenders have to cooperate with their probation officer for them to have a successful reentry. Overall, the reentry process is similar throughout the United States; there are different steps that are taken throughout the process which depends on the ex-offender.

Recent studies have shown that many African American male ex-offenders are under probation supervision once they re-enter the community (McNeill & Beyens, 2013). McNeill and Beyens (2013) discovered African American male ex-offenders who

are under supervised probation abide by a different sentencing rule for being found guilty. For example, McNeill and Beyens (2013) found that throughout the United States, sentencing differs such as supervised probation, incarceration, and or community service. Overall, the United States sentencing and incarceration practices vary depending on the crime committed.

Mass incarceration impacts local neighborhoods that African American male ex-offenders reenter (Davis, 2014). Disadvantages communities have a far greater chance for mass incarceration because African American male ex-offenders who are residents of these communities, are in and out of jail and prison a lot and return to the same situation after incarceration (Davis, 2014). The impact of confinement not only disconnects the lives of the African American male ex-offenders but their family, children, parents, and their community (Davis, 2014). Unfortunately, the devastating effect mass incarceration has on African American male ex-offenders is, that it destroys their self-esteem and opportunities offered; it is important to understand the ramifications of mass incarceration (Davis, 2014). In sum, mass incarceration has been an issue for some time and has had a major effect in the world.

Community-Based Reentry Programs

The New York Department of Corrections (NYC DOC) offers reentry resources to African American male ex-offenders (White, Saunders, Fisher, & Mellow, 2012). One of the reentry resources is the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement (RIDE) program, which assists ex-offenders in their transition back into the community (White et al., 2012, p.125). White et al. (2012) mention the RIDE program helps African American male ex-

offenders connect to health and human support organizations in the community (White et al., 2012). 'The program process begins 90 days post-release (White et al., 2012, p.125). Overall, White et al. (2012) question the efficacy of the program.

White et al. (2012) conveyed NYC DOC's investment in the RIDE program not only for the reentry services but the safety of the communities. Also, NYC DOC invests in the RIDE program to reduce recidivism (White et al., 2012). Unfortunately, NYC DOC does not have the power to keep African American male ex-offenders engaged in the RIDE program, but they pay for their involvement in the program (White et al., 2012). Overall, White et al. (2012) gestured it is up to the African American male ex-offenders in New York City to want to become involved with the RIDE program.

More important, the RIDE program partners with other service agencies within the community that are also in/outreach programs (White et al., 2012). When African American male ex-offenders are released from incarceration, they are assigned a intake case manager, who assists in addressing their needs (White, et al., 2012). Consequently, the rapport between African American male ex-offenders and their intake case manager may be absent. Overall, the RIDE program offers unlimited resources for African American male ex-offenders to participate; however, it is up to them to be involved.

The rehabilitation process for African American male ex-offenders reentry varies based on the needs of that particular individual. White et al. (2012) declare research reveals, assisting ex-offenders is more successful for some than others. More important, the prerelease correctional programs have a huge impact on the reentry process for African American male ex-offenders based on what is offered inside incarceration and in

their communities (White et al., 2012). Some correctional facilities focus on programs that assist them with post-release reentry (White et al., 2012). Most African American male ex-offenders are afforded the opportunity to participate in correctional facility programs.

Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) is located in Arlington, Virginia, and assists reentry persons (Dean, 2014). The OAR Reentry Program is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide services for African American male ex-offenders who need rehabilitation for justice, love for humanity, and personal assistance (Dean, 2014). Dean (2014) discovered that this particular study focused on the barriers the program faced while helping African American male ex-offenders meet their needs and how the program could improve. The program offered African American male ex-offenders' sources that could eventually help them throughout their reentry process. The services offered are assistance for employment, peer mentoring, creating a resume, vocational and technical skills training and leadership skills (Dean, 2014). Dean (2014) proffers that OAR provides other services to ex-offenders, such as the proper attire for job interviews, transportation, food, housing, mentoring and guidance with retrieving the necessary identification.

Furthermore, Dean (2014) explained not only does OAR serve adult African American male ex-offenders from a community-based reentry level but also jail-based programs. More importantly, OAR extends their service to over eight hundred African American male ex-offenders per year and four hundred African American male ex-offenders for a pre-release program from Arlington, Virginia Detention Center (Dean,

2014). Overall, the OAR reentry program offers a lot of services to the current incarcerated African American men and African American male ex-offenders.

Voting Rights

After incarceration, African American male ex-offenders assume their debt to society is paid. A long-time tradition for African American male ex-offenders who are convicted felons is that they lose their privilege to vote in some states (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). In fact, Travis and Petersilia (2001) reported in Washington D.C. and forty-six more states created restrictions for felons to vote and a total of fourteen states refuse felons to vote at all. In addition, about 13% African American male ex-offenders are deprived of voting rights altogether because of them being a convicted felon (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). Overall, this type of treatment could impact African American male ex-offenders by making them not feel like a citizen.

From a review of the literature, the lack of opportunities leads to recidivism (Brown, 2017). Within the United States, research has shown about 65 million people have a criminal record (Brown, 2017). Also, Brown (2017) suggested the United States would be satisfied in knowing that most criminal records are based on incarceration and sentencing. This description has caused deprivation in the lives of African American men and banned them from having employment, housing, transportation, education and overall federal and government assistance (Brown, 2017). Sadly, Brown (2017) mentioned African American men have a tag beside their names for the rest of their lives even if they have paid their debts back to the community.

Current studies show that there is still a rise of concern about the rights of African Americans (Rodriguez et al., 2015). There is a difference between African American and whites when it comes to voting and political involvement (Rodriguez et al., 2015). Overall, African Americans have encountered a lot of barriers in history during recent years regarding voting (Rodriguez et al., 2015). These findings support the notion of further understanding the perception of African American male ex-offenders.

Drug Treatment Policy

There is a concern for African American male ex-offenders who are substance abusers before incarceration. Luckily, some prisons offer in drug treatment programs for those African American male ex-offenders (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). Travis and Petersilia (2001) recognized that the in drug treatment programs are only offered during incarceration. If in drug treatment programs are connected with other treatments before release, this can reduce the chances of recidivism (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). As a result, Travis and Petersilia (2001) suggested if the community mindfully plans different drug treatment programs plus secure strict supervision for African American male ex-offenders after their transition. Overall, it is important for African American male ex-offenders to find a drug treatment program to help deter them from relapsing and recidivating.

Probation and Parole Supervision

When former African American male drug addicts reenter to their old neighborhoods, this transition could cause old behaviors and habits to return (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). Unfortunately, when African American male ex-offenders return, they

run a greater risk of relapse. For example, after incarceration, if African American male ex-offenders are not provided resources from their probation or parole officers, this could more than likely cause them to recidivate. In sum, it is important to push for drug treatment programs within the community to mitigate recidivism and provide safer communities. Travis and Petersilia (2001) mentioned if African American male ex-offenders are not treated then, they are likely engaged in criminal activities.

Without guidance from probation or parole officers, ex-offenders could be in danger of violating their conditions of parole/probation (Davis, 2014). Surprisingly, African American male ex-offenders are rearrested for violation of their supervision, not newer crimes (Davis, 2014). Pyor (2010) warned this situation had caused the incarceration rates in the United States to rise significantly. More important, the issues African American male ex-offenders face because of probation or parole also contributes to the rise of incarceration in the United States (Davis, 2014). Unfortunately, Travis and Petersilia (2001) described there are not any evaluations on how probation or parole supervision influences on prisoner reentry and incarceration.

Recidivism

The chances of recidivism vary based on the African American male ex-offenders type of release and their individual experiences once reentering the community (Ostermann, 2015). "Recidivism can be broadly defined as a return to criminal transgressions after the imposition of a formal sanction and has been operationalized in several different ways throughout the criminological literature" (Ostermann, 2015, p.164). African American male ex-offenders are more likely to experience post-release

arrests than their Caucasian counterparts. Overall, Ostermann (2015) found that African American male ex-offenders are less likely to recidivate if they can participate in intervention programs. African American male ex-offender could commit new crimes and or be rearrested even when being on supervised probation.

Although recidivism is a tough subject to understand, researchers have found a commonality as to what are the predictors in which causes of recidivism (Hall, 2015). Jancic (1998) discovered the three elements of recidivism are: (1) rearrests, (2) reconviction and (3) re-incarceration. For example, African American male ex-offenders who violate probation or parole will be re-incarcerated which causes an increase in recidivism (Hall, 2015). Overall, rearrests, reconviction and re-incarceration are important factors and predictors of recidivism (Hall, 2015).

Following incarceration, the first six months to a year is known as the most crucial point in the African American male ex-offenders life (Ostermann, 2015). While on probation, probation officers have the responsibility to advise their African American male ex-offender clients. Ostermann (2015) discovered probation officers could not control if their clients will succeed or fail in the community because each client differs according to their potential risks. Whether African American male ex-offenders are high risk or not, the probation officer cannot predict who will not recidivate because it is up to them to want to stay out of prison.

Equally important, the relationship probation or parole officer has with their African American male ex-offenders can determine recidivism (Chamberlain, et al., 2017). For example, if African American male ex-offenders have a positive relationship

with their probation or parole officer they would feel less likely to engage in any illegal activity that might jeopardize them going back to prison (Chamberlain, et al., 2017). Chamberlain et al. (2017) suggests, the positive relationship will encourage the African American male ex-offenders to confide in their probation or parole officer and share personal information that can help them recover from the hardships of incarceration. Overall, positive relationships are important for not only African American male ex-offenders but for the community because recidivism is likely to happen.

African American male ex-offenders who have negative relationships with their probation or parole officer will shy away from expressing barriers they are encountering (Chamberlain et al., 2017). For instance, negative relationships could cause a disadvantage for the probation or parole officers because the community could view them as unsuccessful and lessen their chances of referrals. Additionally, Chamberlain et al. (2017) discovered African American male ex-offenders 'who are under stricter supervision for a longer period would less likely recidivate. The negative relationship does not allow the African American male ex-offenders deprives them of support when reentering the community. Overall, the African American male ex-offenders should have a positive relationship with their probation or parole officer to affect their reentry.

Demographics

Hall (2015) shared age is a major factor and is also an influence on who will recidivate. For instance, research from Bureau of Justice Statistics (2012) shows when the African American male ex-offenders between 21-30 are more than likely to re-offend within six months to a year (Hall, 2015). There are other elements other than age that are

risks for recidivism, and that is maturation (Hall, 2015). Maturity can be a predictor in determining who will re-offend. Overall, Hall (2015) mentioned as ex-offenders' age; they are less likely to re-offend.

Research has shown that African Americans have the highest arrest, rearrests, and conviction, out of in another race in the United States (Jancic,1998). For example, Hall (2015) discovered the Prisoner Recidivism Analysis Tool provided by the Bureau of Justice Statistics notices that African Americans have a recidivism rate of about 78% compared to whites that have a 70% recidivism rate. More important, race plays a huge factor in recidivism and can often be a predictor of recidivism. Also, Hall (2015) found research has shown that structure and culture among African Americans have established incarceration to rising and recidivism. Overall, it is important to understand how race is a major factor in recidivism and can be used as a source to decrease recidivism from happening.

The United States population has more than two million African American men that will be incarcerated at some point in their lives (Muhammad, 2010). Muhammad (2010) found that Kelly Miller, an African American sociologist expert found that, within the urban communities better policing can reduce instances of crime. On the other hand, when the urban communities experience bad policing this causes crime to occur and recidivism rates to rise. Overall, African American men have it hard in the community, and without a good community, foundation crime will continue.

Current research has shown that incarceration rates vary by gender (Hall, 2015). Research has shown from the Bureau of Justice Statistics that males have a higher

rearrests rate than females (Hall, 2015). For example, Hall (2015) noted males rearrests rate is 51% compared females whose arrest rate is 43% in one-year before release. Two questions remain standing when it comes to recidivism, and that's what are reasons that cause recidivism to occur and how can research help in advance to determine reduction strategies to help reduce recidivism (Hall, 2015)?

African American male ex-offenders who are married compared to single African American male ex-offenders have lower recidivism rates (Hall, 2015). Research shows that African American male ex-offenders who are married have close family ties and bonds, which is the reason why recidivism is low (Hall, 2015). On the other hand, Hall (2015) mentioned African American male ex-offenders who are single do not experience a close bond with their families Overall; secured relationships can reduce recidivism rates.

Employment

Un-unemployment is a barrier that blocks the African American male ex-offenders from a successful transition and can lead to reoffending (Hall, 2015). Searching for employment is one priority African American male ex-offenders have on their list after incarceration. Hall (2015) recognized when African American male ex-offenders have a hard time trying to find employment, the chances of reoffending increases. On the other hand, when African American male ex-offenders gain employment, this allows them to have legal access to income and deters them from wanting to recidivate (Hall, 2015). If African American male ex-offenders do not have employment or education, this could cause a relapse to prior criminal behavior.

Criminal Background Checks

Criminal background checks are important documentation papers that provide sensitive information regarding the past criminal history of that individual. The National Task Force coined the term "criminal back grounding" as a collection of data about a person's criminal records before employment, which is retrieved through government references for hiring purposes (Post, et al., 2014). Certain job positions African American male ex-offenders apply for, by law, will require employers to administer pre-employment criminal background checks (Post et al., 2014). It is critical that the employers follow proper protocol when it comes to hiring African American male ex-offenders because their decisions impact the community.

Pre-employment criminal background checks are not the only way employers can redeem African American male ex-offenders' past criminal history. Post et al. (2014) found throughout most of the twentieth century; employers relied on polygraph tests to decide on if they were going to hire African American male ex-offenders or not. The Employee Polygraph Protection Act became ineffective and prohibited by private employers (Post et al., 2014). At the same time, employers can request information from previous employers concerning the applicant's past work history to help make a sound decision based on what they learn. Overall, throughout history, there have been different alternatives used to aid employers in the hiring process for African American male ex-offenders.

Ban the Box

Once African American male ex-offenders complete their job application, whether or not they are hired is in the hands of the employer. Ban the Box is one of the most successful policies and now a requirement by law and determines when a criminal history is disclosed (Griffith & Jones Young, 2017). Ban the Box is a method that assists African American male ex-offenders with positively gaining employment, but the ultimate decision yet remains up to the employer. Griffith and Jones Young (2017) shared some employers tend to view African American male ex-offenders with a past criminal history in negative ways, which hinders them from being employed. Although Ban the Box does not alter the way employers view the African American male ex-offenders, it does offer a fair opportunity for African American male ex-offenders to become employed (Griffith & Jones Young, 2017).

Unfortunately, employers can deny the African American male ex-offenders' employment upon learning of their criminal history. At the same time, Ban the Box has generated various ways employers can offer employment to the African American male ex-offenders (Griffith & Jones Young, 2017). Although, there is one aspect that could change the decision of the employer and that is based on the attributes the African American male ex-offenders display during their interview. During the interview process, the employer pays close attention to see how the African American male ex-offenders' character, behavior, and demeanor are being displayed. If displayed positively, the African American male ex-offenders may have a chance of gaining employment at that particular establishment.

In 2015, over eighteen states including Washington D.C. passed the Ban the Box law (Flake, 2015). Flake (2015) found New York City in recent years have established a law called The Fair Chance Act, which does not allow employers to inquire about their applicant's criminal background. The Fair Chance Act is in effect only during the application process (Flake, 2015). Once the African American male ex-offenders have accepted the job, they have the chance to explain past criminal history.

Equally important, Ban the Box laws object is to provide African American male ex-offenders an opportunity to showcase their qualifications without being condemned because of their past criminal history (Gubernick, 2017). However, this problem still rises, and there is a need for legislation because there are quite a few African American male ex-offenders without a job (Gubernick, 2017). As mentioned the unemployment rate for African American male ex-offenders are high, but it is possible the legislation can push antidiscrimination shortly.

President Barack Obama made a powerful statement to prisoners while addressing the Ban the Box policy; he states "If [employers] have a chance to at least meet you… you're able to talk to them about your life; what you've done, maybe they give you a chance" (Melber, 2015, p.1). This allows employers to examine their job candidate's skills rather than their criminal history (Kucharczyk, 2017). Unfortunately, Kucharczyk (2017) found employers will screen the candidate's job application in search of their race and then determine if they are qualified for the job despite their criminal background records. Overall, a lawsuit against employers who are against hiring African American male ex-offenders could ultimately decrease the hiring decisions for minorities.

Positive Outcomes for Ban the Box

Ban the box has been successful in encouraging employers to call ex-offenders especially African American men (Kucharczyk, 2017). Previous research has shown, in Durham North Carolina the hiring rate of African American male ex-offenders has increased tremendously from 2% to 15% (Kucharczyk, 2017). Equally important, Kucharczyk (2017) discovered in 2014, in Washington, District of Columbia, the number of African American male ex-offenders applications which were hired for employment ascended to 21%. This research is proof how Ban the Box has guaranteed that the law will give minorities a chance to secure employment despite their criminal history. Overall, employers who are willing to hire African American male ex-offenders regardless are a demonstration of how they are willing to accommodate the needs of African American men in the community.

Employment Advantages

Transitional Service Programs, also known as Transitional Employment, offers African American male ex-offenders a chance to gain employment immediately after their release from incarceration (Ramakers, et al., 2017). This program offers African American male ex-offenders support in respects to skill training and job assistance (Ramakers et al., 2017). Also, this program is beneficial to African American male ex-offenders in respects to reducing reoffending. Gaining employment after incarceration allows African American male ex-offenders to have finances they need for life's necessities, such as housing, health insurance, driver's license, car, food, and clothes.

However, the jobs offered to African American male ex-offenders are usually minimum wage jobs or temporary employment (Ramakers et al., 2017). Ramakers et al. (2017) mention the program ensures if the African American male ex-offenders have any prior work experience, they are directed towards a familiar work environment to make it easier for them to perform the job. Thus, this program gives African American male ex-offenders a chance to earn an honest income and reduce the chances of recidivism.

Bumiller (2015) suggested when employers are eager to hire African American male ex-offenders they apply the commonsense approach, which allows them to look past the African American male ex-offenders' criminal history and recognize their abilities for the job. Once employers hire African American male ex-offenders for the job, those who are unsuccessful are mostly given a second chance (Bumiller, 2015). Bumiller (2015) discovered that a decent job is hard to find for African American male ex-offenders. Importantly, employers are more likely to hire African American male ex-offenders once they notice their work ethics versus criminal history (Bumiller, 2015). In sum, although most African American male ex-offenders are eligible for hire, some will choose not to work.

Employment Disadvantages

Despite the kind of jobs African American male ex-offenders are offered, some will choose not to work. For instance, some African American male ex-offenders could secure employment if they were willing to search longer; however, low wages will deter them from most jobs (Holzer, et al., 2003). Unfortunately, Holzer et al. (2003) found that

African American male ex-offenders will quit minimum wage jobs and engage in illegal activities for more monetary gains.

Holzer et al. (2003) reported poor skills and lack of work experience impact the chances of ex-offenders being hired. Even though some jobs require little to no experience, African American male ex-offenders still have a difficult time obtaining employment based on their qualities (Holzer et al., 2003). Unfortunately, Holzer et al. (2003) emphasized certain employer's perception of African American male ex-offenders is that they do not show up to work on time and are unreliable employees. Employers set high expectations for the African American male ex-offenders based on how they should respond to their daily job duties.

Employers Discrimination

Employers often fear that hiring African American male ex-offenders could cause endangerment for their establishment (Flake, 2015). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states: "an employer can be held liable for treating people with similar criminal records differently, or for maintaining a policy that screens individuals based on criminal history-but only if such differential treatment is otherwise tied to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin" (Flake, 2015, p.48). However, the community often negatively categorizes African American male ex-offenders because of their criminal records. Despite the criminal backgrounds of African American male ex-offenders, it is important that they have employment of some type to reduce their chances of recidivism. When employers allow African American male ex-offenders a chance, this creates a positive change to prove that their past does not define them.

Currently, some laws ban employers from discriminating against African American male ex-offenders (Flake, 2015). Flake (2015) believed some majority of employers deny African American male ex-offenders a job who pose no threat or risk to themselves or others. Employers may be required to communicate with probation or parole officers of reentry persons hired. Regardless, Flake (2015) pinpointed some employers may foster negative perceptions about African American male ex-offenders.

Employers are willing to bend their hiring policies to accommodate African American male ex-offenders for employment (Flake, 2015). This effort is a step in the right direction considering that thousands of African American men are released yearly. Unfortunately, if African American male ex-offenders are not able to find employment, within five years they are rearrested (Flake, 2015). Flake (2015) discovered African American male ex-offenders are giving the chance to participate in different reentry programs, such as vocational training, employment placement, life-skills training and mentoring. Overall, these opportunities and lowering discrimination laws in the United States will help reduce recidivism.

African American male ex-offenders criminal background can deter employers from hiring them although this has no bearing on their job performance ability (Flake, 2015). The employer is more accepting to retain African American male ex-offenders as employees who are positive, have good faith, and demonstrate no unreasonable risk to others (Flake, 2015). Flake (2015) found the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program allows employers to claim one billion in federal tax credits per year for hiring a certain target population, such as African American male ex-offenders. Additionally, the Second

Chance Act of 2007 (SCA) grants permission for the federal government to provide the African American male ex-offenders' resources for the success of their transition (Flake, 2015).

The SCA purpose is to provide funding for any program that works with juveniles and reentry programs (Green, 2013). Any reentry program under the SCA grant, must comply and execute a plan to that helps reduce recidivism over a five-year period (Green, 2013). Tonry (2011) found some reentry programs help reduce recidivism by alternating their policies (Green, 2013; Tonry, 2011). Tonry (2001) mentioned reentry programs could help reduce recidivism through an organized, financially stable, cost-efficient program that deters African American male ex-offenders from wanting to return to prison (Green, 2013 & Tonry, 2011). Overall, it is important for African American male ex-offenders to be honest about their needs so the reentry programs can better assist in the reentry process.

Flake (2015) discovered in 2001 Attorney General Eric Holder organized and designed legal changes for employers to facilitate, which assists African American male ex-offenders in finding employment. Attorney General Eric Holder coordinated Reentry Council to assist in creating effective reentry policies (Flake, 2015). Further, some employers work closely with community-based organizations and hire African American male ex-offenders for different jobs (Flake, 2015). In Columbia, South Carolina, "Felons R Us" hire African American male ex-offenders with a criminal background or non-violent felony arrests (Flake, 2015). Overall, African American male ex-offenders are afforded the chance to find employment despite discrimination.

Kucharczyk (2017) found that discrimination laws in the United States are successful. Sometimes when African American male ex-offenders are completing job applications, they feel a sense of discrimination from the employer during the interview process. To reduce the chances employers may discriminate, it is important for the legislators to modify employment discrimination regulation against minorities (Kucharczyk, 2017). There is a need for stronger discrimination laws to prevent employers from discriminating against those with a criminal background.

Housing

Finding safe and affordable housing is an obstacle many African American male ex-offenders have to overcome after incarceration (Bender, et al., 2016). Property managers and landlords are less likely to rent to African American male ex-offenders because of their past criminal history. Bender et al. (2016) found that housing is limited to African American male ex-offenders, especially felons who have been convicted of sex crimes (Bender et al., 2016). Felony charges can disqualify ex-offenders; from public housing (Bender et al., 2016). In sum, African American male ex-offenders face a hard time finding housing because of their criminal past.

Bender et al. (2016) stated that African American male ex-offenders who are on parole might be required by law to isolate themselves from anyone who is involved in illegal activities. This could impede them from living with family or friends. Research has also shown that African American male ex-offenders will end up in a homeless shelter due to lack of stable housing (Bender et al., 2016). It is critical that African American male ex-offenders can find housing to make an easier transition. Not only will

the African American male ex-offenders feel a sense of security, but they will gain emotional and social support (Bender et al., 2016). Overall, without a place to call home after incarceration is a barrier majority of African American male ex-offenders face.

There are over 90% of incarcerated persons a year that will be released into the community; housing is a major concern (Schneider, 2017). Within the United States, Schneider (2017) discovered African American populations are affected by the returning of African American male ex-offenders. Currently, African American male ex-offenders represent 2.3 million prisoners, and there are 1 million who will reenter the community (Schneider, 2017). It is essential for this target population to have access to housing. Overall, gaining housing after incarceration is a substantial step towards a successful reentry for African American male ex-offenders.

Schneider (2017) agreed that former African American male ex-offenders are not always able to afford to house Under the Obama Administration, the federal government created rules and direction under the Fair Housing Act (FHA) to fight against discrimination for African American male ex-offenders (Schneider, 2017). The FHA does not allow discrimination for housing based on race, color, religion, sex, family status, or nationality (Schneider, 2017). Overall both FHA and HUD protect African American male ex-offenders of color because this allows them the opportunity to gain housing despite their past criminal history.

Urban Communities

African American male ex-offenders after incarceration, return to impoverished neighborhoods, which lead to chances of reoffending (Lockwood & Nally, 2016).

Unfortunately, Lockwood and Nally (2016) mentioned if African American male ex-offenders receive no support to help them upon release, their only option is to return to what is familiar, and that is a crime. African American male ex-offenders' crime rates are substantially higher in urban businesses and where communities are (Lockwood & Nally, 2016). Overall, Lockwood and Nally (2016) alluded that crime decreases property value.

Furthermore, as already stated, the impact of crime and violence within the urban communities does decline the property values (Lockwood & Nally, 2016). There are elements associated with the decline in property: "(1) increased drug or crime hot spots in neighborhoods, (2) increased residential migration or relocation, (3) increased poverty rate among residents who could not relocate due to their financial capacity, (4) increased police presence to combat crime problems in deteriorated neighborhoods" (Lockwood & Nally, 2016, p.59). Lockwood and Nally (2016) found research has shown that in urban communities businesses developments will decline and this hinders the African American male ex-offenders from gaining employment. Sadly, when there is a decline in employment, this lowers their employment opportunities and causes crimes rates to rise in urban communities (Lockwood & Nally, 2016). In sum, if African American male ex-offenders find employment this will help them become more financially stable and independent (Lockwood & Nally, 2016).

Research has shown that in Indianapolis, they offer a variety prisoner reentry programs for African American male ex-offenders, but there is one program that has proven to be successful, Transition from Prison to Community (Lockwood & Nally, 2016). Lockwood and Nally (2016) identified the main goals of (TPC) is to assist and

support African American male ex-offenders returning into the community by elevating

safety for the public, communication with business, and how to utilize correctional and

safety policies based on evidence. The reentry process immediately begins once the

African American male ex-offenders enters into the Indiana Department of Corrections

(IDOC) where the risk-need assessment form begins for each African American male ex-

offenders prosecuted (Lockwood & Nally, 2016). In sum, it is important for African

American male ex-offenders to take advantage of the resources provided.

After incarceration, African American male ex-offenders have to work with their

parole or probation officer to receive help from social workers within the community

(Miller, 2013). Social workers help African American male ex-offenders learn how to

become social with others, adjust to their working environment by utilizing their skills

learned in prison, participate in reentry programs that assist them in finding work, and

maximizing their opportunities to participate at different organizations throughout the

community (Miller, 2013). Subsequently, the law and the community viewed

rehabilitation as a process and strategy the differed across the region (Miller, 2013).

Overall, rehabilitation differs depending on the time in history and the area in the United

States.

Eason (2012) discovered the terminology hyperghetto is important to understand

because it brings clarity of how African Americans, urban and rural communities are

connected. Also, the definition for hyperghetto is a symbol that represents a relationship

between the ghetto and the prison based on incarceration of African American men

(Eason, 2012). Overall, rural and urban communities where African American male ex-offenders return are high in poverty and low in advancement.

Education

While incarcerated, African American male ex-offenders have a chance to earn an education before release (Hall, 2015). Having this opportunity deters African American male ex-offenders from having the urge to want to engage in criminal activity after release (Hall, 2015). In addition, Hall (2015) mentioned it is important for African American male ex-offenders to participate in their correctional education program to mitigate chances of reoffending. The correctional education programs offer inmates the chance to achieve educational goals" (Hall, 2015, p.13). Overall, correctional educational programs help steer African American male ex-offenders back on the right track after incarceration because they have learned skills to prepare them for the community.

Correctional and educational programs have a positive effect on prisoners. Hall (2015) suggested not only does correctional education teach prisoners how to adapt to the community without wanting to engage in crime but also it exposes them to the job market. Also, the prisoners who take college courses while being incarcerated are less likely to commit crimes after being released compared to those prisoners to do not participate in college courses (Hall, 2015).

Also, the goal of correctional education is to motivate the prisoners in learning (Schlesinger, 2005). Schlesinger (2005) found that research lacks in knowledge, what motivates inmates in learning. Schlesinger (2005) identified during incarceration; the correctional educator has the opportunity to motivate the prisoners into wanting to learn.

For instance, the correctional education can become a mentor to the prisoners by teaching

them life skills they need to know to cope with everyday barriers that will occur once

they leave (Schlesinger, 2005). Overall, the correctional educator has to understand

prisoner's learning abilities to help reach their full potential.

Schlesinger (2005) mentioned it would help the correctional educator to know

what motivates prisoners to learn, to prepare them for reentry better. Schlesinger (2005)

found that correctional educators often learn through classroom discussions the different

motivating components, which help African American males to learn in the classroom

and apply what they learn once they leave.

Schlesinger (2005) claimed while in the correctional classroom the correctional

educator can lead the African American male prisoners in learning how to work together

in groups with their peers. This learning process is a strategy that teaches the prisoners to

build their social skills for transitioning back into the community (Schlesinger, 2005). In

sum, in a classroom educational setting, the prisoners learn more than education but

lifelong skills that will be instilled in them for years to come.

Current research shows that structured mentoring programs are important for the

success of African American male ex-offenders in the community (Rodriguez,

2015). Rodriguez (2015) found mentoring programs are successful avenues that strive to

support these men in completing their educational goals towards graduation. Also, many

colleges have offered mentoring programs for African American males because their

educational goals are less likely to be achieved compared to other races (Rodriguez,

2015). Rodriguez (2015) believed the mentoring programs that are offered through higher

education is important for African American males because this gives them the opportunity to complete their degree with guidance. African American males are less likely to complete their education, let alone, college education, and it is a wonderful opportunity for them to experience mentoring programs that give them the push they need to succeed (Rodriguez, 2015).

Moreover, African American males learn to meet their personal goals and obtain their dreams while being a part of mentoring programs (Rodriguez, 2015). The leaders have the chance to learn how to encourage and motivate the African American male ex-offenders into finishing their education (Rodriguez, 2015). This particular population has educational barriers they encounter, and the mentoring programs can decrease the barriers and offer more possibilities.

Family

Some African American male ex-offenders who are incarcerated have families that require their support. They are often faced with figuring out how they will pay their child support fees once released. Prisoners are not able to pay their child support this could break the connection between them, their children and their families. Overall, the law holds these prisoners responsible for paying their child support debts back once they reenter in the community (Roman & Link, 2017).

Roman and Link (2017) found once African American male ex-offenders reenter the community it is important for them to return home to their families. The children of African American male ex-offenders look forward to spending time with their fathers

(Roman & Link, 2017). Overall, the role of African American male ex-offenders is to rebuild their familial bonds.

Research has shown that African American fathers versus white father more likely to recidivate because of their financial status after incarceration (Spjeldnes et al., 2015). Also, (Spjeldnes et al. 2015) mentioned there are approximately 50,000 parents who are incarcerated because they failed to pay their child support (Spjeldnes et al., 2015). For African American male ex-offenders' employment is hard to find and is one reason why they are not able to pay their child support (Spjeldnes et al., 2015). In sum, most African American male ex-offenders have children and are responsible financially following incarceration.

The Child Support Enforcement system holds the African American male ex-offenders accountable for making their child support payments (Spjeldnes et al., 2015). Also, Roman and Link (2017) suggested before African American male ex-offenders are released, it is important for them to find a reentry program that can assist them in finding a job; this can help them to tackle financial responsibilities. Sadly, not paying their child support can lead to engaging in criminal activity.

Reentry Program in North Carolina

The reentry program for the current study, offers services to African American male ex-offenders in North Carolina to assist in their transition from prison. The reentry program noted that Bibles are not allowed in the schools anymore but are encouraged in prison. If kids were allowed to read it at school, they might not end up in prison (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.).

The reentry program's objective seeks to promote the greatest potential of African American male ex-offenders in their pre-and post-release (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.). By creating safer communities and partnering with stakeholders to ensure access and learning for employment and housing to reduce victimization (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.). The reentry program helps create opportunities for returning citizens to transform their own lives by fostering cognitive behavioral changes, promoting personal responsibility, and healthy relationships. Also, while making positive contributions to the community nurturing, promoting entrepreneurship by identifying their passions, encouraging them to work in a field they truly love and motivating them to pay it forward by hiring others with barriers (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.).

The reentry program provides the following services: (1) Intensive one to one mentoring, (2) Life skills classes, (3) Cognitive behavior classes, (4) Anger management (5) Job readiness training, (6) Entrepreneurship, (7) SSI/SSDI access Outreach and recovery (NCSOAR PROGRAM), (8) Housing, (9) Health care referral to assist veteran with e-benefits, (10) Vita program, (11) Federal and state taxes, (12) Pre-release and post-release, (13) Family reunification, and (14) Faith based counseling (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.). Furthermore, the intake process involves evidence-based assessment, referrals to support services, mental health, housing, addiction counseling, and health care (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.). The clients of the reentry program are offered resources from within the community that will help them during their transition. The reentry program makes sure that all of the clients needs are met before the reentry intake case manager closes their case.

The reentry program seeks to promote the greatest potential in pre- and post-release African American ex-offenders' population and create safer communities, by removing barriers that impact the ability African American male ex-offenders to reintegrate (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.). Additionally, the program may impact public policy and save taxpayer dollars by reducing incarceration (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.). In sum, the more incarceration is reduced, the better chances African American male ex-offenders will not return to jail or prison.

The reentry program works hard to break barriers, promote potential, and the well-being of individuals and the community. The reentry program believes in building community relationships and raising awareness of important issues and resources, thus increasing opportunities for each in our community. We need people just like you to help! For more information, please fill out and return card today to the friend, faith, and family box (Tri-Counties Crusaders, n.d.).

Governor Roy Cooper stated in the recent press that, African American male ex-offenders had paid their debts back to the community, it is important for the community to want them to become productive citizens in their communities (North Carolina Department of Public Safety, n.d.). The reentry program helps those African American male ex-offenders to better themselves; this will be more beneficial to the community (Thames, 2017). Overall, the reentry program strives to help African American male ex-offenders become a productive citizen in their community.

Mr. Greg Singleton, an African American male ex-offender, discusses his life during incarceration, and how he changed. Singleton was incarcerated for five years on a

conspiracy charge he did not commit in 1992 (Thames, 2017). During incarceration, Thames (2017) stated that Singleton his education created his resume and portfolio for potential employers of the future.

Singleton uses his past to help African American male ex-offenders' transition after incarceration (Thames, 2017). Currently, he works with African American male ex-offenders one-on-one twice a week teaching them different skills to help them through daily interactions (Thames, 2017). For example, Singleton teaches African American male ex-offenders how to articulate their words, shake hands properly and learn what they want out of life (Thames, 2017). Singleton has created a platform for these African American male ex-offenders to express themselves freely (Thames, 2017). He also teaches them never to give up even if they are denied employment multiple times in a row (Thames, 2017).

Also, Thames (2017) described once the basic needs of the African American male ex-offenders' requests are accomplished they will move on to their next goal. Working to stop recidivism in Onslow, Craven, and Pamlico counties are the goal for Mrs. Smith-Davis and Chairman Mr. Singleton. Together these two can make a difference that cannot only impact their facilities but the community as a whole. In sum, preventing recidivism is the overall goal for the reentry programs.

First Transition | Reentry

Second Transition | Peer Mentor | Transportation | Program Resources

Third Transition | Education, Job Training Skills, Life Skills | Religious Based, Mentoring, Housing | Transportation | Job Placement | Interviews, Social Skills Development
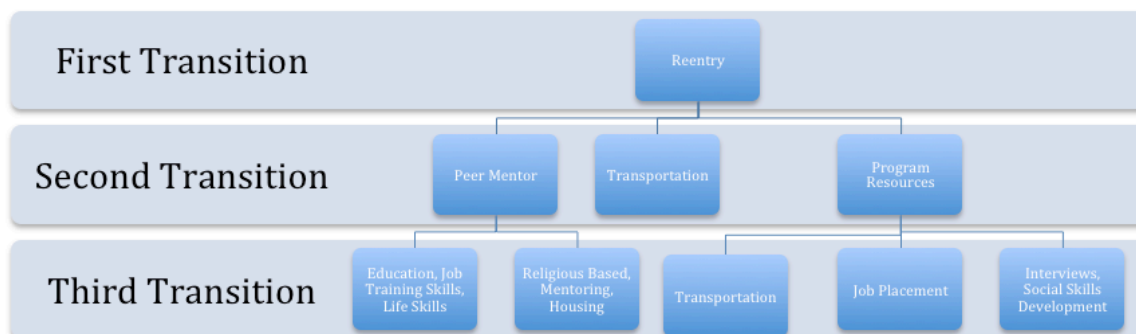
Figure 2. Reentry transition chart: Transition of reentry.

Relevance of Literature

This literature review foundation related to my research topic because it provided an analytical lens for my study and the gap in the literature. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year.

Each African American male ex-offenders who participated in a reentry program after incarceration had different perceptions and experiences. Also, understanding how the participation of African American male ex-offenders in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year can help determine ways to help reduce recidivism.

Social Change Implications

The results of my study provided a positive contribution to the community because understanding if a reentry program helps or not does lower the chances of recidivism. Not only did the results lower the chances of recidivism but also the criminal activities in the community as well. As stated early, each African American male ex-offenders who participate in a reentry program will have different perceptions and experiences. Knowing what did help or did not help African American male ex-offenders with their transition allowed the reentry program to evaluate their service and make the proper adjustments. The more adjustments made to suit the needs of African American male ex-offenders the better the community and reentry programs.

Gaps in Research

From a review of the literature, there were several gaps. This qualitative research study filled gaps in the literature regarding how the reentry program may improve its services based on the perceptions of the African American male ex-offender participants. My study also addressed the gap in knowledge regarding how the relationship between the intake case manager and the intake participant (see Dean, 2014). Dean (2014) noted lack of understanding of how the reentry programs assist in advancing the educational opportunities for African American male ex-offenders. Dean (2014) also observed a gap in understanding the impact reentry programs on African American male ex-offenders' interpersonal relationships and social networking skills. Although there are several gaps in the literature, the proposed study only focused on addressing the perceptions of

African American male ex-offenders in North Carolina, as it related to their participation in a reentry program and how it impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year.

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, an examination of the literature on different barriers African American male ex-offenders encounter after incarceration along with, the various views and opinions from the community about reentry. Following incarceration, some African American male ex-offenders are participants of a reentry program that impacted the likelihood of recidivating within one year and other resources offered and while others do not. The community provides returning citizens with resources that are known to assist in successful reentry. After all, there have been many studies conducted by researchers on the success and unsuccessful transition of African American male ex-offenders and reintegration.

Throughout this literature review, underlined barriers and emphasis on the different rehabilitation efforts were highlighted. Also, the literature review stress in detail the factors that impact that cause the African American male ex-offenders to recidivate, including the social relationships. Overall, the literature emphasizes the opportunities correctional facilities grant to African American male ex-offenders before their release.

Labeling, social disorganization, and social learning theory is the foundation for the current literature review. In addition, the literature highlighted how mentoring programs and the mentors play a vital role in the lives of African American male ex-offenders. Hence, the many resources African American male ex-offenders aid in reducing the chances of reoffending. Next, in Chapter 3, will provide an extensive

description of the research method for the proposed study. The research design and interview questions will be explained. Also, from the target population and data collection methods will be presented.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of my general qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year. Ravitch and Carl (2016) described qualitative research as the means of exploring the way people perceive the world and how their personal experiences relate to what they have observed. My general qualitative study addressed the real-life experiences and viewpoints of African American male ex-offenders' who had participated in a reentry program after incarceration, to describe how the reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year. The primary goal of this qualitative research is to answer the research question: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year?

In my study, I analyzed the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding their participation in a reentry program and whether this influenced their likelihood of recidivating. My role as the researcher was to ensure transferability of the findings regarding the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders about participating in a reentry program and their likelihood to recidivate within one year. The findings enhanced the understanding of why African American male ex-offenders recidivate even though they participate in a reentry program.

Chapter 3 presents the rationale for the research method and provides detailed information regarding the research approach, including the background, participants, population, instrumentation, and sampling used for my study. I explain the qualitative

design and describe the data collection and examination process. Also, I describe the background of my study.

<div align="center">**Research Design and Rationale**</div>

Research Design

I used a general qualitative design that included case study and phenomenological techniques that allowed me to explore how participants lived experiences explained their perceptions. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) found that a general qualitative design can be used when more than one data collection instrument is needed to carry out my study. Also, Creswell (2013) noted that phenomenological research is a way to analyze the phenomenon of a group of people by using different data collection methods, such as interviews. I also used elements of a case study design to evaluate participants' satisfaction with the program (see Yin, 2014). Quantitative methodology does not allow researchers to work closely with participants to build a relationship and better understand their perceptions. The qualitative approach was used to gain a clear understanding of the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding whether participating in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that phenomenological research methods are used to understand participants' descriptions of their personal experiences by reflective structural analysis. The grounded theory approach was not appropriate for my study because my intention was not to develop a theory from the data. Ravitch and Carl described the grounded theory approach as a way to develop a theory from interviews, observations, documents, and other data sources. A focus group was not appropriate for

my study because I was not targeting a consumer group. Rubin and Rubin (2012) shared

that in a focus group the participants represent the population's interest. I applied rigor in

my general qualitative study to enable findings to be useful and credible for others (see

Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl noted that rigorous qualitative research allows

the researcher to study and pay careful attention to the participants' real-life experiences

and have a clear understanding of them.

Creswell (2009) identified qualitative research as a way for researchers to

examine a person's or group's social perceptions. Creswell also noted that qualitative

research is a process that allows researchers to use the data collected from the participants

and create themes that are based on the questions and procedures. Qualitative

methodology afforded me the opportunity to understand the perspective of participants in

my study. Qualitative methodology enables researchers to gather information to

understand participants' perceptions of life, values, and beliefs (Saldaña, 2009).

Qualitative methodology provides researchers the opportunity to take what they learn

from participants and apply this information to gain more insight into the phenomenon.

Rationale

Recent studies indicated how in-person interviews are a good data collection tool

to gain insight into the lives of participants after incarceration (Smith, 2013). Rubin and

Rubin (2012) found that researchers who scheduled structured interviews can ask fewer

questions and follow-up questions to learn more about a particular topic. I organized

structured interviews that included the reentry survey (see Appendix A) to explore how

participating in a reentry program impacted participants' likelihood of recidivating within

one year. I conducted in-person interviews with the participants rather than Internet interviews or phone interviews. There are disadvantages to in-person interviews such as finding the location and setting up the time. The advantages to in-person interviews include seeing participants' facial expressions, body language, overall demeanor and taking notes based on these observations.

Role of the Researcher

Throughout my general qualitative study, I focused on the use of in-person interviews and ensured there were no interventions or bias during the interview process. Rubin and Rubin (2012) described in-depth qualitative interviewing as a way researchers can learn by listening closely to others and observing the emotions expressed and the barriers these individuals face. I administered in-depth interviews by taking a different approach called responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Rubin and Rubin described responsive interviewing as a way for researchers to pick their participants, listen to what is said, and build more questions on top of the answers provided. Responsive interviews evolve from regular conversations between the researcher and participant and go beyond the conversation in more detailed ways (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I established a professional relationship with the participants to ensure they were not being forced to participate in my study.

I selected the participants for the current study based on the participants response to the research question: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year? Rubin and Rubin (2012) mentioned the importance of research questions and how the research

questions can explain the way people view their world. Therefore, responsive

interviewing allowed me to focus on a particular topic and stay focused on the research

question at hand instead of jumping to different subjects (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I

applied the bracketing technique during the in-person interview process. Ravitch and Carl

(2016) express the bracketing technique as a way for me to observe and keep track of

their interpretation of the participants. Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained how important

the bracketing process is for a phenomenological study. I focused on the reflexivity

design since questions arose during the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I made

sure animosity, judgment, personal views, opinions, or feelings towards the participants

did not arise during the interview process. This could have influenced the participants

answers, research methodology, and reflexivity design.

Methodology

My general qualitative study focused on a general qualitative design and includes

a case study and phenomenological methods that examine the phenomenological

experiences of African American male ex-offenders. Merriam and Tisdell (2015)

recommended researchers to apply a general qualitative design to their study if analyzing

the life experiences of participants for an in-depth understanding. Ravitch and Carl

(2016) identified the purposeful strategy, single significant case, which is one in-depth

case that provides me with a rich and deep understanding of the subject at hand. One

reentry program in North Carolina allowed me to pool participants for the current study.

There were 60 participants pooled for the survey, in which ten were used for the

interviews. Hence, the client satisfaction survey (see Appendix A) provided to the

participants was used as an analytical lens for understanding this current study. Only the African American male ex-offenders were participants for my study.

Participation Selection

Ravitch and Carl (2016) acknowledged that before I can choose a specific data collection, I must contemplate the individuals who should be in the research study as participants. For this particular general qualitative study, there will only be ten interviewees considered for participants of this research. Fusch and Ness (2015) mentioned that interviews are a way researcher can saturate their data. I was able to use the clients of the reentry program who fit the gender and race of my study as participants. I chose ten participants who are African American and males to be a part of my study as participants. Thus, the reentry program consists of 60 participants, for which a purposive sample was conducted to identify current participants based on gender and race. The results from the purposive sample randomly selected a sample (n=10) of African American male participants. Creswell (2013) noted a sample size of ten is sufficient for qualitative interviews. I randomly selected the participants (n=10) by placing all the African American male ex-offenders' names in a hat. Creswell (2014) found that this is an appropriate sampling method for this type of study. I sought permission from the reentry staff of the reentry program to ensure that my study can be conducted. I had access to the (n=10) participants names, telephone numbers, and email address. I contacted the (n=10) participants, and asked their permission to be participants for my study and set up the interview appointments. Thus, the reentry staff was not involved in

the participation selection, invitation, interviews, and did not know who is being interviewed.

Smith (2013) stated the importance of the participants sharing their stories about the reentry process because this allows myself and the reentry program to learn more about reentry on a much deeper level. African American male ex-offenders are chosen as the participants for my study because they are an overrepresented population in the prison system. More important, the workers of the reentry program can show consistency and work together for the sake of the clients in the program. When I received permission from the IRB, then the selection of participants and data collection started. Because of the purposive random sampling strategy that was utilized, individuals who were not African American male ex-offenders and did not match the gender and or race of my study were excluded. The reentry staff of the reentry program were contacted so I could have access to the clients and permission to interview the African American male ex-offenders from the reentry program in North Carolina.

The location of the interviews took place at the reentry program in a room specified by the administration. The overall study sought to identify and display the strengths of the participants in the reentry program. The current study explored the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding whether participating in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year.

Instrumentation

My study utilized three instruments to conduct the qualitative interviews that will explore the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders and if participating in a

reentry program impacted the likelihood of recidivating within one year. The three instruments were myself (the researcher), the client satisfaction survey (see Appendix A), and qualitative interview questions. The reentry program has utilized the one instrument (see Appendix A) in the past. This instrument is the client satisfaction survey (see Appendix A), which was sent to the 60 participants of the reentry program via U.S. postal mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope for the participants to mail back to me upon completion because their responses were anonymous. I was given permission, and approval from the reentry program to use this instrument for my study. Moreover, the demographics of the survey (see Appendix A) about the participants varied other than their gender and race, which were the same. To ensure accuracy, I used a digital tape recorder to record the interview process and took notes accordingly for data purposes.

Data Collection Instruments

As previously stated, the reentry program has created one instrument that was used during the qualitative interview process (see Appendix A). The survey (see Appendix A) asked the participant questions about their experience with the reentry program overall. During the qualitative interview process, the participants was asked open-ended questions regarding their perceptions about the reentry program and if it helped assist them with their transition or not back into the community. Altogether, the two instruments provided me with the information needed to answer the research question: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year?

Stakeholders

The stakeholders for the reentry program consist of the Chamber of Commerce, Onslow Community Outreach Program, City Council, and Local Churches. Also, the reentry program works closely with probation to ensure there is an updated list of the inmates who are on their way back into the community and which probation officer will be assigned to them. More important, once the incarcerated African American men are released, the reentry program works closely with NC works, which assists the African American male ex-offenders with finding employment. The reentry program focuses on being the face of social injustice within the community and breaks the chains of the continuous cycle of reoffending. With the help of the stakeholders and the community, the reentry program has a chance to make a difference not only for the African American male ex-offenders but the community as well.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of the instrument have been established because the instrument has been used in a prior study. Dean's (2014) research study is the foundation for my study because my study explored a reentry program as well. Also, Dean (2014) uses an OAR client satisfaction survey instrument in her study. For this particular study, I utilized a similar survey instrument in my study (Appendix A) named client satisfaction survey with modifications added. Once the African American male ex-offenders exit incarceration and obtain a probation officer they are then referred to the reentry program. As soon as African American male ex-offenders contact the reentry program, a day and time is set to perform the intake and follows the interview and survey (see Appendix A).

It is important for the reentry program to have all of the necessary information about each African American male ex-offenders to ensure they are receiving the services required by them. After African American male ex-offenders have completed their reentry process and are now self-sufficient individuals, an assessment was conducted to see the stages of where they began to where they are now.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

As previously stated, the purposive random sample is the African American male ex-offenders (participants), which comprised of (n=10) in the reentry program. Also, the reentry program opened their office doors for me to conduct the qualitative interviews in a room. Hence, the exact location of where the qualitative interviews conducted were determined, access and permission were granted to me. During the qualitative interviews, I gathered and compiled the data based off of what I learned. After the qualitative interviews were completed and the data collection were done, I did not require a follow-up of the participants for my study. More importantly, the three instruments collected, are kept in separate files and keep secured away from the hands of the public for privacy reasons in a lockbox at my home. Although, during the qualitative interview process, I used a digital tape recorder to record the interviews and ensure that this is kept private also and in the lockbox at my home. Lastly, I provided the participants with two consent forms to ensure there is an understanding of their rights as an individual and a participant in my study. For the interview consent forms to be valid, the participants were required to sign the form.

Data Analysis Strategy

Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined validity as ways researchers can show their findings are faithful from the participant's experiences in qualitative research. Also, Creswell (2014) stated data analysis applied in qualitative research consists of both the data collection and the write-up of the findings. For example, after the qualitative interviews were completed, I summarized what was said in the interviews by examining the interviews and creating memos that can be used as a narrative in the final report (Creswell, 2014). Creswell and Miller (2000) stated qualitative interviews represent as a secondary lens to help explain and validate my findings from the participants and qualitative interview responses. I used a device to record the interviews for clarity, creditability, and integrity. Furthermore, in the qualitative research study, I used a unit of analysis that stems from a design. According to Yin (2014) indicated that the unit of analysis varies depending on the research design and what is found during the data collection process. Thus, my general qualitative study strived to project the perceptions and experiences of reentry from African American male ex-offenders. Saldaña (2016) noted that it is important for the research questions to align with my study. The research question for my study: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year? Does suit the proper research design. More important, Saldaña (2016) found that for researchers who are conducting qualitative research must apply coding in different stages to show themes from the qualitative interviews.

My study consisted of coding and themes that revealed a pattern. My general qualitative study included data saturation from data triangulation. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined data saturation as some way researchers can stop creating themes for their data. For example, when I saw the same patterns reoccurring, I was able to answer the research question efficiently (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained data triangulation as a way I can gather the data from different sampling strategies, places, and with different people. Hence, I used NVivo Software that transcribed the qualitative interviews and organized them into themes and categories (Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, NVivo Software is a tool that allowed me to save time, work more with less stress, and have the ability to backup files with the findings and evidence from the data collection (QSR international, n.d.). This allowed the me to be safe from any discrepancies during the data analysis. I used a manual method to analyze the paper survey (see Appendix A) for this qualitative research study in Microsoft Word Excel and report the findings using tables and graphs. Powell and Renner (2003) noted when using a manual method, a researcher types into a computer program, a word processing program (i.e., Microsoft Word, Word Perfect or Excel).

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

The terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are necessary words to use when conducting qualitative research. Guba (1981) shared that credibility allows researchers to prove they can explain patterns that are often too difficult to explain in their research. Hence, credibility is one of the most important aspects of the research design for the qualitative study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch

and Carl (2016) stated credibility is directly related to my instruments, data, and research design. Essentially, I conducted qualitative interviews that included open-ended questions.

Guba (1981) mentioned that in qualitative researcher I am not to produce statements that can be established by other people or settings but to develop in-depth descriptive, content pertinent statements. Miles et. al (2014) offered that reliability of the qualitative study is important because I have to make sure every step in the research process is consistent and reasonably stable. Also, I showed reliability through their instrument of choice for the qualitative interviews. Thus, reliability will not be effective if I use the instrument for another population that does not relate to my study. Lastly, Ravitch and Carl (2016) identified, confirmability as a way researchers' qualitative study can be confirmed. For example, I should always look for their data to be confirmed throughout their qualitative research and not look for objectivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Strategies

I ensured that the qualitative research study meets all requirements, follows the rules, and align with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Walden University (IRB) is responsible for ensuring the research complies with the ethical standards and federal regulations set by the university (Walden University, n.d.). Also, I took the proper precautions to ensure the information collected during the research process is kept safe and secure away from the public. As stated, my general qualitative study did meet all requirements, follow the rules and align with the Walden University (IRB) for a complete dissertation and publication.

Ethical Dilemmas

For my general qualitative study, I ensured the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders' reentry experiences remained aligned throughout my study. The participants in my study were solely African American male ex-offenders, no other gender or race. Keeping the ethical concerns in mind, I respectively interviewed the participants, voluntarily, without any signs of harassment and or forcefulness. Therefore, the participants had the chance to decline to participate in the general qualitative study if they felt any reason not to do so. Also, participants real names were not used for my study. The participants were coded as interviewer 1, interviewer 2, and interviewer 3, etc. In summary, the participants of my study were not made to feel uncomfortable during the interview process because I communicated to the participants ensuring them that their responses to the questions were safe and will not be duplicated.

Confidential Data Protection

As stated the proper precautions were taken to ensure information collected during the research process is kept safe and secure away from the public. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that confidentiality could be assured if I take the time to use proper wording on the two consent forms and ensure that I keep my promises to the participants. Also, I ensured the participants that their name and identity would be protected no matter if I had to sacrifice their writings and findings during research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). More importantly, I invested in a lock box to keep the entire instrument evaluations about the qualitative interviews safe and secure away from the public. Lastly, I examined the recorded digital tapes of the interviews to ensure clarity and reliability.

Summary

Altogether, Chapter 3 provides the reasoning for using a general qualitative

design that includes a case study and phenomenological methods that answers how there

is a possibility African American male ex-offenders' perceptions of participating in a

reentry program may or may not have impacted their likelihood of recidivating within

one year. Chapter 3 provides detailed sections on how the proposed study will be

completed. Additionally, Chapter 3 provides a rationale as to why the research design

was chosen and how it answered the research question. More importantly, Chapter 3

describes in detail about in-depth interviews and how I applied this method to understand

the participants experience with reentry. Also, this chapter includes the different themes,

codes, and patterns that were done based on the participant's experience with reentry.

Next, Chapter 4 includes the research design in greater detail and data analysis

based on the experiences of the participants about reentry. Chapter 4 examines the

demographics of the participants who will voluntarily participate in the qualitative

interviews for my general qualitative study. Lastly, this chapter will include codes,

themes, and patterns that will explain the perceptions of the participants in greater detail.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of my general qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year. My study addressed the lack of knowledge of African American male ex-offenders' experiences in reentry programs regarding their likelihood to recidivate within one year. The following research question was used to guide my study: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year? Three interview questions aligned and were created with the overall purpose of answering the research question for my study. Each interview question gave the participants the flexibility to answer them in an open-ended manner. The results of my study are displayed using five taxonomy tables from the Client Satisfaction survey, which includes the number of categories within the survey and the number of frequencies occurring from within the survey (see Appendix A) categories (Duquia, et al., 2014). Lastly, Chapter 4 includes a description of my study setting, participants demographics, the data collection methods executed, data analysis approach, results of my study, and the evidence of trustworthiness.

Research Question

The following research question was created to explore the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding whether participating in a reentry program impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year. The research question for my study: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year?

Setting

The setting of my study was conducted at a reentry program in North Carolina. The interviews were conducted at the reentry program and were coordinated by reentry staff in advance. Once IRB approval was obtained, (approval # 06-20-18-0663466), the interviews were then scheduled. During the interviews, I placed a sign on the door outside to prevent any unnecessary interruptions. The room was spacious and comfortable for participants and the researcher. The reentry program was closed for business on the days the qualitative interviews were being conducted, for the privacy of the participants. The ten interviews were conducted for my study, two interviews per day over a two-week period.

Participant Demographics

The participants included 60 African American men whose ages ranged from 21 to 56; however, only ten were selected for the qualitative interviews. The demographic information was collected in the survey. The ten participants for the interviews were selected randomly (see Creswell, 2014). The ten African American male participants described how after being incarcerated impacted their life (see Harding et al., 2014). Table 1 shows the demographics African American male participants (N=60).

Table 1

Participants' demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Race
1	30	Male	African American
2	22	Male	African American
3	21	Male	African American
4	34	Male	African American
5	22	Male	African American
6	51	Male	African American
7	33	Male	African American
8	22	Male	African American
9	21	Male	African American
10	23	Male	African American
11	21	Male	African American
12	23	Male	African American
13	33	Male	African American
14	31	Male	African American
15	30	Male	African American
16	29	Male	African American
17	26	Male	African American
18	21	Male	African American
19	44	Male	African American
20	42	Male	African American
21	51	Male	African American
22	21	Male	African American
23	53	Male	African American
24	56	Male	African American

25	55	Male	African American
26	22	Male	African American
27	31	Male	African American
28	22	Male	African American
29	43	Male	African American
30	46	Male	African American
31	55	Male	African American
32	27	Male	African American
33	25	Male	African American
34	21	Male	African American
35	32	Male	African American
36	41	Male	African American
37	45	Male	African American
38	23	Male	African American
39	32	Male	African American
40	53	Male	African American
41	55	Male	African American
42	21	Male	African American
43	33	Male	African American
44	46	Male	African American
45	48	Male	African American
46	46	Male	African American
47	36	Male	African American
48	22	Male	African American
49	41	Male	African American
50	40	Male	African American
51	37	Male	African American

52	35	Male	African American
53	23	Male	African American
54	20	Male	African American
55	21	Male	African American
56	56	Male	African American
57	44	Male	African American
58	35	Male	African American
59	24	Male	African American
60	21	Male	African American

(end of table)

Note: This table represents the 60 participants from the reentry program who completed the Client Satisfaction Survey. The Client Satisfaction Survey was anonymous.

Data Collection

Before collecting data, I established rapport with the participants. This allowed participants to feel comfortable in answering questions. All data were collected by a survey and by asking three open-ended interview questions to ten selected participants. The survey (see Appendix A) and the three interview questions were created to obtain in-depth responses from the participants regarding their perceptions and lived experiences about being in a reentry program. Participants contact information was provided on a list, including their home addresses, from the executive director of the reentry program. I randomly selected the ten participants for the interviews by pulling their names out of a hat. The survey was mailed out to all 60 participants in a self-address stamped envelope, including the survey consent form. On the scheduled days of the qualitative interviews, the ten participants were provided interview consent forms, and their signatures were

required before the start of the interview. All ten interviews were scheduled for 45 minutes to one hour over a two-week period. I conducted two interviews per day.

During the qualitative interviews, the participants were provided with one pen and two interview consent forms so they could sign both forms. The participants kept a copy of the interview consent form for their records, and I kept a copy of the interview consent form for my records. While the participants were speaking, I took notes on a yellow notepad, using a pen. Participants were observed during the interviews for data analysis. Only one recording device was used to collect the data. A backup recording device was present in case problems arose with the first recording device. The Client Satisfaction Survey (see Appendix A) was issued before the in-depth qualitative interviews began, and there was no alteration in the data collection plan.

At the end of each interview, I collected the signed interview consent forms and placed them in an envelope. The signed interview consent forms, surveys, and recording device were placed in a lockbox and taken to my home to ensure privacy. Data will be stored away for ten years.

Data Analysis

As previously stated, five taxonomy tables represent the survey (See Appendix). All 60 surveys were manually counted (see Appendix A) and entered the data into Microsoft Excel. The survey was broken (see Appendix A) down into five sections that represent the five taxonomy tables. Also included on the five taxonomy tables are a total of frequencies recorded from the number of participants certain responses and the percentages divided by the total number of participants, which is 60. The interviews were

transcribed by a professional service. By employing a third-party transcriber, it mitigated

the changes of researcher bias. Furthermore, by having the interviews transcribed, it

allowed for the complete focus on overall data analysis, including coding of themes.

Once the transcriptions were completed, they were reviewed twice to double

check that each interview was accurately written. Then all ten interviews were coded and

uploaded in NVivo to confirm themes found. The same professional transcription service

was employed as a third-party checker for codes and themes found in NVivo (QSR

International, n.d.). It was important to hire a professional transcribing agency for the

interviews, so more time could be spent analyzing the data collected.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Thick descriptions were utilized to execute the present study's transferability and

to enrich the context which complimented the overall study's credibility and

dependability. The results from my study represent transferability for other African

American male ex-offender participants who are ex-offenders for the possibility of

similar studies conducted in the future. Although the population is the same, the results of

my study may not be reliable. This is due to the participant's perception and experience

with reentry programs. My study has been presented in a clear and precise manner which

enhances my study's confirmability. There were no changes made to modify my study's

credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability as mentioned in Chapter 3.

Results

The research question, gaps in research, and my study's purpose align with my

study's results. As noted before, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to

explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that it is important for research methods to align with their research question and their methods. Most of the participants had the same opinions about the reentry program being a benefit to them; while a few felt that the reentry program was not beneficial to them. Thus, the participant's responses shared insightful information that showed how the reentry program impacted their lives positively or negatively. Communication during the interviews with the participants revealed how their life circumstances improved some from being a part of the reentry program.

Gaps in Results

The three gaps in research were found in my study's results based on the information provided by the participants. The three gaps in research were mentioned previously in Chapters 1 and 2. The relationship between the participants and their intake case manager was examined (Dean, 2014), lack of understanding how the reentry program assists in advancing the educational opportunities for African American male ex-offenders (Dean, 2014), and the impact on interpersonal relationships and social networking skills of African American male ex-offenders (Dean, 2014). Essentially, all ten participants had a great relationship with their intake case manager. For example, one participant explained that him and his intake case manager communicated daily and that she held him accountable to the personal goals he set for himself. Another participant described how his intake case manager called him to remind him of his upcoming appointments that he had scheduled with his doctor, disability, vocational rehab, NC

works, Trillium, and, his intake case manager. On the other hand, my study addressed the full understanding of what it is like to be a participant in a reentry program after being incarcerated for an extended period.

The African American male ex-offender participants revealed and confirmed how there is a lack of understanding on how the reentry program assists in advancing the educational opportunities (Dean, 2014). Subsequently, two participants described how they were not afforded the help and assistance they sought after when coming to the reentry program. For example, one participant revealed that he was not afforded the resources he needed from educational to child support. Another participant explained how he did not know the reentry program helped with different educational programs such as a General Education Diploma (GED), high school diploma, or vocational trade. Dennison & Swisher (2018) noted that crime and education have a negative association between one another. My study revealed the impact on interpersonal relationships and social networking skills of African American male ex-offender participants (Dean, 2014). During the qualitative interviews, the in-depth conversations that the participants shared demonstrated how their interpersonal relationships and networking skills had developed more while being a part of the reentry program.

Result Tables

In this section, there is a display of five taxonomy tables that represents the survey (see Appendix A), including the calculated results from the questionnaire responses by the 60 participants, the results from the in-depth qualitative interviews, and the themes that emerged from the in-depth qualitative interviews. All the results were

rounded to the nearest tenth to show an even 100% for all data collections to obtain the correct data calculations. The detailed data provided in paragraph format describes diverse cases. Below the five taxonomy tables are paragraphs that show the ten participants responses in detail based on the transcribed interviews from their open-ended responses. Lastly, under the coding pattern and theme section is a display of the themes emerged from the in-depth qualitative interviews on figures.

The first section of Table 2 shows that 40% of African American male ex-offenders (N=24) indicated that their primary reason for coming to the reentry program was for basic needs assistance. Next, 33% of African American male ex-offenders (N=20) indicated their primary reason was for housing assistance. Finally, 21.6% of African American male ex-offenders' (N=13) primary reason was for employment advising. None of the African American male ex-offenders (N=60) mentioned their primary reason being for advocacy support, individual sessions with intake manager, or vocational skills advising.

The second section of Table 2 shows that 35% of participants (N=21) chose housing assistance as one of the services received at the reentry program. Next, 28% of African American male ex-offenders (N=-17) chose vocational skills advising. 23% of African American male ex-offenders (N=14) chose basic needs assistance. 8% of African American male ex-offenders (N=5) chose employment advising. Finally, 5% of (3) the participants (N=3) chose individual mentoring and tutoring. None of the African American male ex-offenders mentioned their primary reason being for advocacy support, and or individual sessions with intake manager.

The third section of Table 2 shows that 90% of the participants rated employment advice as being the least useful, whereas, 10% rated employment advising to be the most useful. Next, 65% of African American ex-offenders rated housing assistance as being moderately useful and compare to 35% believed housing assistance to be most useful. In respects to advocacy support, 95% of rated it as somewhat useful; whereas, 1 % African American male ex-offender rated advocacy support as being moderately useful. African American male ex-offenders, 3%, rated individual sessions with intake manager as being the most useful. Individual sessions with intake managers as being moderately useful constituted only 3% of respondents; whereas, 90% rated the sessions as being somewhat useful, and 6% being the most useful. On the scale of vocational skills advising, 1% found it to be least useful compared to 98% rating as most useful. On the scale of basic needs assistance, 76% found it to be least useful, compared to 23% as most useful. Finally, on the scale of individual mentoring and tutoring, 98% found it to be somewhat useful.

Table 2

Program Services

Please indicate your primary reason for coming to the reentry program.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Employment Advising	13	21.6%
Housing Assistance	20	33%
Advocacy Support	0	0%
Individual Sessions with Intake Manager	0	0%
Vocational Skills Advising	0	0%
Basic Needs Assistance	24	40%
Individual Mentoring and Tutoring	3	5%
Please select the reentry service(s) received.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Employment Advising	5	8%
Housing Assistance	21	35%
Advocacy Support	0	0%
Individual Sessions with Intake Manager	0	0%
Vocational Skills Advising	17	28%
Basic Needs Assistance	14	23%
Individual Mentoring and Tutoring	3	5%

Please rate the following services you received with one (1) being the least useful and five (5) being the most useful.

	Frequency	Percentage
	(1) 54	90%
Employment Advising	(5) 6	10%
Housing Assistance	(3) 39	65%
	(5) 21	35%
Advocacy Support	(2) 57	95%
	(3) 1	1%
	(5) 2	3%
Individual Sessions with Intake Manager	(3) 2	3%
	(4) 54	90%
	(5) 4	6%
Vocational Skills Advising	(4) 1	1%
	(5) 59	98%
Basic Needs Assistance	(1) 46	76%
	(5) 14	23%
Individual Mentoring and Tutoring	(2) 59	98%
	(5) 1	1%

(end of table)

Below is a list of the open-ended responses from the participants that displayed more detailed information about their overall experience with the reentry programs services offered:

- "until I actually went to the classes…got put on to therapy and started meeting different people coming out the door learn a little."

- "help get some clothes or food."

- "help with transportation be able to travel through the city."

- "to help with a job and to further my education."

- "to go get clothes for interviews for jobs."

- "tri-counties crusades to get help with housing."

- "but then you start realizing that you need it might as well fall in line because aint none of those classes going do nothing wrong to you…not going to lose no sleep or nothing behind it."

- "they are teaching me how to keep that job because jobs are hard to find when you are a two-time felon."

- "help with like you know any like hints or you know you can go here or go there anything that can help with as far as like getting back in school or studying or anything it all benefits you."

The first section of Table 3 highlights participants responses to their participation in the reentry program. Of the participants, 58% agreed that the reentry program services offered assisted them in a successful transition back into the community after incarceration. Another 23% strongly agreed that the reentry program did assist their transition; conversely, 18% did not feel the program helped. The second section of Table 3 displays the responses from the survey on whether the reentry program assisted participants in overcoming barriers. 58% of participants agreed that the reentry program did assist them in overcoming the barriers they encountered after incarceration. Participants who strongly agreed that the reentry program helps them overcome barriers constituted 26% of respondents, whereas, 15% disagreed. None of the respondents checked strongly disagreed, neither agree or disagree, or don't know. The third section of

Table 3 shows the results of whether the participants would recommend the reentry

program to friends and family. Of the 60 participants, 60 % agreed that they would

recommend the reentry program, 33% strongly agreed, whereas, 6% disagreed.

Table 3

Participants' Perceptions of Participating in the Reentry Program

The reentry program services offered assisted me in a successful transition back into the community after incarceration?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	11	18%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	14	23%
Agree	35	58%
Don't Know	0	0%

The reentry program services offered assisted me in overcoming the barriers I encountered after incarceration?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	9	15%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	16	26%
Agree	35	58%
Don't Know	0	0%

I would recommend the reentry program services offered to friends and family?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	4	6%

Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	20	33%
Agree	36	60%
Don't Know	0	0%

(end of table)

During the in-depth qualitative interviews, some of the participants discussed how their perceptions were about being a part of the reentry program:

- "but my perception it's a good perception now my perception was wrong at first but I got a very different mind about it now."

- "My perception…my perception of the reentry program…I never been in one before."

- "Well… I figure like this you know it's a good thing, before I got here I was really really really really really a lot wild, ya know what I mean, I was ready to do anything I was ready to go back to prison."

- "well…um I didn't really have any any 'preconsume' notions about it because when I knew Karol I knew the type of person she was."

- "my perception on reentry program, my first thing I thought about was its kind of crazy…all for real I thought it was a waste of time waste of my time."

- "my perceptions is that um it's a good thing…really because it had of helped me move on to the next step or my next goal."

- "um well at first I was kind of skeptical about the program."

Table 4 displays the responses in respects to participants perceptions of their reentry case manager and their experience in the reentry program. The first section of Table 4 it was found that 61% agreed that the program prepared them for life post-release. Whereas, 15% of respondents disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed that the reentry program prepared them enough for assimilation back into society. Next the second section of Table 4, participants were asked whether they felt participating in the reentry program reduced their likelihood of reoffending. The results indicated that 61% agreed and 13% strongly agreed that the program helps to reduce their chances of recidivation. Conversely, 18% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed that the program would reduce their chances of recidivation. The third section of Table 4, in response to whether participants were actively engaged in their service plan with their intake manager, 61% agreed, whereas, 20% strongly agreed. Results indicated that some respondents 18% did not engage with their case manager in developing their service plan. The fourth section of Table 4 respondents were asked whether they felt they were held accountable for reaching their short and long-term goals. The results indicated that 58% agreed and 26% strongly agreed, their goals were met. However, 6% strongly disagreed and 8% disagreed that their goals were met.

Table 4

Participants' Perceptions of Their Reentry Case Manager and Their Experience in the Reentry Program

Did participating in this reentry program prepare me for life post release?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	2	3%
Disagree	9	15%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	12	20%
Agree	37	61%
Don't Know	0	0%
Did participating in this reentry program reduce the likelihood that I will re-offend?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	4	6%
Disagree	11	18%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	8	13%
Agree	37	61%
Don't Know	0	0%
I was actively engaged in developing my reentry service plan with my intake manager.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	11	18%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	12	20%
Agree	37	61%
Don't Know	0	0%

I held myself accountable for reaching my short-term and long-term goals.

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	4	6%
Disagree	5	8%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	16	26%
Agree	35	58%
Don't Know	0	0%

(end of table)

The participants responses, displayed below, are based on their perceptions of their reentry case manager and their experience in the reentry program:

- "she I mean also because one of the other things was being able to get my social security card and being able to get my birth certificate um if they allowed that to happen to because the fact is I couldn't find mine and I asked about it and they said "yea yea we be able to do that for you we able to go get that for you" and the next week or so I got it happening."

- "my case manager because she made sure I had stuff she made sure that that if there was stuff that need to be told to me she got back and we stayed in contact every day to make sure I was doing the right thing I was looking for a

job I reported I've reported all the stuff she need me to report she helped me with my educational got me backpack when I needed notebooks pencils pens and so on…and she went out her way to make sure that I was giving the stuff needed not my wants my needed."

- "yea to know that you have a support system and a group of people because that is the one thing that I've been told before I got out of prison by a couple of people you know you always got to have a support system have a have some people in place that don't want to see you succeed momentarily they want to see you succeed succeed all the way to have Tri-Counties Crusaders there you know to get the letter to receive the letter right before I came home about it it meant like okay there's people anticipating my return there's people anticipating helping me do the right things to ensure that I don uh re-offend and commit another crime and go back to prison."

- "the intake um my intake manger also kept on calling and checking on me and that was a surprising to me that they they give you feedback or give you a call back of how is things going um is there anything else that we needed to do and and my question was answered things was happened and they were moving faster than I was moving so it it works out."

- "case manager the intent was there the intent was there we had great discussions."

- "my caseworker and I we had nice conversation we connected."

- "at times I am down and out and wanna to wanna commit another crime to do something different come here and manager, I call the manager like hey is life better on the outside then the inside to do more things, we have a good ol hour two-hour conversation and get my head right and im good for the rest of the time…it's pretty cool."

- "this reentry program has really shown me a lot of positive ways and smaller ways to go about cause my goal is to own my own business uh and this program with Karol has actually pointed me in the right direction so it has been."

- "but see that my intake manager is a nice person a caring person. A caring person and I could tell that uhh that if she really could have helped me she would of helped me."

- "my intake officer was really nice woman."

- "just because my intake officer was alright and I got a chance to speak freely with her and speaking and speaking freely that's important you know that's therapeutic all by itself…so just alone I would say yeah, I benefited just from that alone but as far as the benefits that was no just from my intake and being allowed to speak freely with her, I benefited I did benefit from that."

Table 5 displays the responses of the participants perceptions of how being incarcerated impacted their rights. The first section of Table 5, shows the responses on whether participants felt they were deprived of discriminated against as an African American male ex-offender because of their criminal history. The responses revealed that

38% strongly agreed and 46% agreed that they felt they were deprived or discriminated against because of their criminal history. Conversely, only 15% disagreed that they were deprived of or discriminated against as an African American male ex-offender based on their criminal history. The second section of Table 5, shows results of whether participants felt that reentry services provided them with necessary resources to assist with ways to deal with everyday problems. Results indicate that 20% strongly agreed and 53% agreed, the services provided at the reentry program help mitigate daily problems. However, 25% of participants disagreed that the reentry services help them to deal with daily problems.

Table 5

Participants' Perceptions of How Being Incarcerated Has Impacted Their Rights

I feel that I am deprived and discriminated against as an African American male ex-offender because of my past criminal history.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	9	15%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	23	38%
Agree	28	46%
Don't Know	0	0%
I feel that the reentry services offered have given the necessary resources to assist me on how to deal with everyday problems.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Disagree	15	25%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	12	20%
Agree	32	53%
Don't Know	0	0%
The reentry program services offered have provided me the necessary referrals for anger management.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	10	16%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%

Strongly Agree	22	36%
Agree	28	46%
Don't Know	0	0%

(end of table)

The third section of Table 5 shows the number of responses to the survey question on whether the reentry program services offered provided the necessary referrals for anger management. The results revealed that 36% of participants strongly agreed that they were provided with the referrals needed for anger management. Of the respondents, 46% agreed that the reentry program services offered provided the necessary referrals; whereas, 16% disagreed.

The participants shared conversations revealed how being incarcerated impacted their rights:

- "personal struggles that held me back but in all I was putting my most effort forward and they were putting their most effort forward to help me better myself and get established and back."

- "help me get back restarted and not feel like I'm lost I've got people that is coaching me to do better and help me to strive to do better and get back on track on where I need to be in life."

- "personal struggles just be um on probation on house arrest really just dealing with the things with house arrest not really being able to go as many places as I can being to get up and do what I want to do when I want to do it."

- "I was getting to get myself together and it push more to be able to do more and get my life together."

- "like I mean I know everybody's got situations is different but me getting out having to register as a sex offender I knew that certain jobs weren't you know going to opening the door and excited to offer employment so I felt like that kind of put me in a different category than other offenders."

- "I don't follow rules good that's why I went to prison…I mean I got hungry I tried to take something ya know what I mean I was hungry I was starving out there."

- "ya know I been in prison for I went to prison for aggravated robbery…I mean kind of caught up at the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong person cause he told on me..I was doing the wrong thing because it was my choice but that person…told on me…but being in there five years straight it really didn't change me to a good person it turned me into a monster prison aint really to change you ya know what I mean it's to just get you out the way I mean you go in there it's a whole nother set of rules."

Table 6 displays the responses to several questions pertaining to participants perceptions of the educational and mental health opportunities provided to them. The first section of the table shows results to whether participants felt that the reentry program services offered assisted them in advancing their education. Results reveal that 50% agreed and 13% disagreed that the reentry program services offered assisted in advancing their educational opportunities.

Table 6

Participants' Perceptions of the Educational and Mental Health Opportunities Provided to Them

I feel that reentry program services offered have assisted me in advancing my educational opportunities.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	8	13%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	22	36%
Agree	30	50%
Don't Know	0	0%

The reentry program services offered provided services that met my needs.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	6	10%
Disagree	12	20%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Agree	7	11%
Agree	35	58%
Don't Know	0	0%

The reentry program services offered meets my expectations.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	16	26%
Disagree	6	10%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0%

Strongly Agree	0	0%
Agree	38	63%
Don't Know	0	0%

(end of table)

The second section of Table 6 reveals that 58% of participants agreed and 11% strongly agreed that the reentry program services offered met their needs. Of the responses, 20% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed that the services provided met their needs. The third section of Table 6 reveals that 63% of participants agreed that the reentry program met their expectations, whereas, 26% strongly disagreed that the reentry program met their expectations. Finally, 10% of the participants (N=6) disagreed that the reentry program met their expectations. None of the respondents chose neither agreed, strongly agreed and or don't know responses.

Participants shared in-depth discussions on their educational and mental health opportunities; these perceptions are displayed below.

- "like filling out the application you know and taking advantage of the college job app."

- "I was still go to church and that was one thing that helped me out a lot going to church but I still kind of got…I always had that that pent up anger it took me probably a good year of being home to finally ya know what I am saying to say hey to put that back it all happened for a reason maybe you got into something that God want you to work on you know I had to start to look at things a different way."

- "Simple stuff like that make somebody's day it makes me little more

  motivated makes somebody want to go get it done you know."

- "educational yes I was benefited with that too I passed four out of five

  sections I gotta take the last section again, I'm happy out there to get my high

  school equivalency diploma."

Figure 3. Results of an NVivo word query (see Appendix A). This word cloud was created in NVivo using the nodes displayed in the (see Appendix A).


Figure 4. NVivo themes of the reentry program.

Codes Patterns and Themes

For the ten interviews, a professional transcribing service was employed to transcribe the interviews. A knowledgeable method was explored to help analyze the audio files. Also, the transcribed interview responses from the participants and the survey (see Appendix A) were explored in NVivo Software which created themes (QSR international, n.d.). As previously stated, the transcribed qualitative interviews were manually coded to show the results of the data collected. The lumping and splitting technique were utilized to analyze the quality of the in-depth interviews (Saldaña, 2016).

Furthermore, eclectic coding was used to group In Vivo and Emotion Codes, was identified in the first coding cycle, after, the combination of elements created the pattern of coding. Pattern coding is appropriate to explore when the first coding cycle needs to be grouped and placed into categories; this that helped to identify the emerging themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016). Second cycle coding is often utilized as of way to reorganize and reanalyze data that has been coded in the first coding cycle (Saldaña, 2016). The pattern coding methods were employed as the second code of cycling to help explain the findings in the data (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher should be able to identify three main issues after the second coding cycle to signify the final phase of the qualitative analysis (Saldaña, 2016).

Figure 4 presents the three themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis. NVivo coding was researched to break down the themes, which reveals that three themes emerge into categories. The themes revealed were confirmed by a third-party member checking service. The three themes are as follows: enhancement of their

well-being, intercommunication, and resourceful. The first theme enhancement of their

well-being and the data related is listed below in the descriptions:

- "Um..its good to see somebody like yourself taking interest in ya know the

  umm the plight of excons coming home and stuff like that because it I mean

  whether anybody knows it is a hard world out there and its you only um I just

  I got a couple friends of mines and even myself you are only a mistake or a

  wrong thinking of mind of going back because you cause if TriCounties if the

  reentry program wasn't here you probably have more guys that have already

  went back."

- "I was like oh its possible to bounce back once you hit a wall and able to

  function again."

- "to make sure when you get out you don't do anything crazy or get so

  frustrated because doors are getting slammed in your face that you go out and

  commit another offense and go back os from hearing that right there let alone

  it was an eye open like okay there are actually people out there that care and

  want to see you do good."

- "the quick development of getting myself together they were willing to get

  myself together more than I was getting to get myself together and it push

  more to be able to do more and get my life together."

The second theme is intercommunication. The participants comments revealed in

the communication between themselves and their reentry case manager.

- "when when they had called me back and they have helped me a lot."

- "kept on calling and checking on me."

- "that they on me, so I might as well be on myself, that's all, a little self-motivation."

- "with the person when I was there, very very steady very very constant very annoying at the same time you know somebody calling you and you know they about to get on your nerves…trying to deal with but they are very persistent tho very persistent."

Finally, the third theme is resourceful. The participants comments provide meaningful insight on how the reentry program was resourceful for them.

- "that is actually a great idea because it took me about…even though I got a job two weeks out."

- "that's how I got familiar with the whole with the whole organization with the whole thing anyway because I've seen the success behind it I've seen the success stories."

- "I met a couple of people that were involved in reentry counsels in different counties and they gave me the information for the one here so through talking to them and them telling me how everything was."

- "they've had the right resources."

- "send you to resources to better help you know better yourself in that area and if you got any physical medical health they will send you to resources that will help you they get that especially if you don't have insurance."

- "I talk to a lot of guys that come through this program."

Summary

Chapter 4 provided a detailed description of the setting of my study, demographics of 60 participants, data collection methods and procedures conducted, different data analysis techniques, evidence of trustworthiness, and the overall results of the data collected. The results of my general qualitative study showed a variation of perceptions of African American male ex-offenders who are participants of the reentry program. Three themes were uncovered and presented throughout the chapter consisting of enhancement of their-wellbeing, intercommunication, and resourceful. The findings from my study answered the research question presented. The results from my study also yielded that the reentry program does positively impact the likelihood of participants not recidivating after incarceration.

Chapter 5 discusses in detail the interpretation of the research findings, recommendations for the executive director of the reentry program, implications for social change, future suggestions for future research, and the limitations for this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of my general qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year. My review of the literature indicated a lack of research on African American male ex-offenders' experiences in reentry programs and their likelihood to recidivate within one year. My study filled a gap in the literature by exploring how a reentry program may improve its services based on the perceptions of the African American male ex-offender participants. Dean (2014) reported that little was known about the relationship between the intake case manager and the intake participant, how the reentry program assists in advancing the educational opportunities for African American male ex-offenders, and the program's impact on the interpersonal relationships and social networking skills of African American male ex-offenders. The current study was significant because it addressed the perceptions African American male ex-offenders regarding their participation in a reentry program and their likelihood of recidivating within one year.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed summary of my study, including an interpretation of the findings, limitations of my study, recommendations for further research, recommendations for the executive director of the reentry program, implications for social change, and conclusions.

Research Question

The following research question was created to explore the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders regarding whether participating in a reentry program

impacted their likelihood of recidivating within one year. The research question for my study: How does participating in a reentry program impact the likelihood of an African American male ex-offender recidivating within one year?

Interpretation of the Findings

The participants shared their lived experiences as African American male ex-offenders regarding the likelihood of recidivating within one year after participating in a reentry program. The findings revealed that participants had a better perception of participation in a reentry program and felt it benefited them overall. The three themes were as follows: enhanced well-being, improved communication skills, and increased resourcefulness of participants. Findings were consistent with those from previous studies. Dean (2014) stated how critical it is to understand the needs of African American male ex-offenders and whether the community can meet their needs because this impacts their likelihood of recidivating.

Previous research indicated that it is important to determine whether the reentry program is well-equipped to meet the needs of African American male ex-offenders and support them in their reintegration back into the community (Dean, 2014). The African American male ex-offender participants in the current study described how important it was for the reentry program to meet their needs. Participants reported how they hoped their expectations would be met after having a conversation with their intake case manager. Participants described why they came to the reentry program and what they were seeking. Some of the most common responses included employment advising, housing assistance, and basic needs assistance. It was clear that some participants needs

had been met and while others had not. Dean (2014) noted the importance of the Client

Satisfaction Survey in rating the services provided based on the feedback given from the

African American male ex-offender participants.

Participants whose needs were met by the reentry program reported that this

increased the chances of more ex-offenders wanting to be a part of the reentry program.

Frazier (2014) stated that the reentry process is a program that requires multiple steps,

and the success of one person depends on the success of another person. Participants

whose needs were not met by the reentry program decreased the success rates of the

reentry program. These findings may lead to the adjustments in the reentry program.

Frazier (2014) noted that after four decades, reentry for African American male ex-

offenders remains difficult because individuals are returning to the same poverty-stricken

communities.

Limitations of the Study

In my study, some limitations were discovered and needed to be addressed for the

improvement of my study. The first limitation was the sample population was limited to

one ethnic group and gender: African American male ex-offenders. The second limitation

was the inability to ensure honest and accurate answers in the interviews and survey.

During the interview process, the participants could have been nervous or fearful when

answering the questions. The Client Satisfaction Survey (see Appendix A) was

administered on a volunteer basis, and the participants had the right to deny responding to

any questions that may have caused them to feel uneasy. The third limitation was the

purposive random sampling method. The interview participants were chosen out of a hat,

limiting the chances of the other 50 African American male ex-offenders from being chosen. The fourth limitation was the structured qualitative interview, which limited the questions that could be asked of the African American male ex-offender participants. For example, questions about the types of crimes committed could not be asked.

Recommendations for the Reentry Program

Reentry programs are critical for all ex-offenders, especially African American male ex-offenders. Reentry programs address the basic needs of these individuals and provide continuing support for their journeys and success after incarceration (Frazier, 2014). The results of my study indicated several recommendations for reentry programs.

Recommendation 1

The reentry program was the only program in the county. Having at least one more reentry program could decrease the number of clients intake case managers have on their caseload. Fewer clients per each intake case manager could increase the chances of the clients needs and expectations being met.

Recommendation 2

The reentry program should broaden its curriculum by offering more classes for clients other than anger management. Clients who are referred to the program by their parole and or probation officer are required to take substance abuse, reintegration strategies, communication skills, and vocational classes.

Recommendation 3

The reentry program should try to eliminate the use of paper, and go green. The information taken during the clients initial intake with their intake case manager is

confidential. The excessive documents used such as the evidence-based assessment should be completed electronically. This ensures the safety and that the privacy of the clients information is kept away from the eyes of the public.

Recommendation 4

Due to limited funding, the reentry program should apply to more grants to have the money needed to support the program and the clients. Without funding, it makes it difficult to accomplish what needs to be accomplished for the reentry program itself and the clients. For example, if a client needs some work boots for work, the reentry program is responsible for buying them.

The four recommendations mentioned above are important for the reentry program to take into consideration. The reentry program is not only a great asset in North Carolina but much needed in the community.

Recommendations for Future Research

All future studies should not limit their population to one specific ethnic group and gender. My study focused only on African American males. Hearing the perceptions of other ethnic groups and genders could have diversified the responses given for in-depth qualitative interviews. In addition, future studies should research how reentry programs operate and what it requires to make it successful because this does impact how the clients perceptions are about the reentry program. Lastly, future studies examine the perceptions of their clients with the perceptions of the clients at the reentry program. It would be beneficial to compare and contrast the similarities and dissimilarities of the perceptions of their clients.

Implications for Social Change

As mentioned, the reentry Program is a great asset in North Carolina, but much needed in the community. By exploring my study, it helped to understand the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders because of their responses shared during the in-depth qualitative interviews. By sharing their stories, resulted in positive individual change. My overall study's implication for social change is supported by not only the perceptions of African American male ex-offenders but how the reentry program can help provide a safer community in North Carolina.

Conclusion

As previously stated, the transition from confinement to freedom is quite an adjustment for African American male ex-offenders. Once becoming a part of the reentry program, African American male ex-offenders have the opportunity to have their needs met. Depending on the motivation and willpower of the individual, does determine their success not only in the reentry program but for their gain. The purpose of this qualitative was to explore the perceptions of whether the reentry program impacted African American male ex-offenders likelihood of recidivating within one year. Although each African American male ex-offender participant had different perceptions about being a part of the reentry program, each perception provides the reentry program the opportunity to improve their services.

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Appendix A: Client Satisfaction Survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions. Your responses will be used to improve the reentry program services. Your responses will be kept confidential and participation in this survey will not impact any services received.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Please enter your age _____.

2. Please select the appropriate gender category.
_____ Male
_____ Female

3. What is your race/ethnicity?
_____ African American/Black
_____ Asian American
_____ Caucasian/White
_____ Hispanic
_____ Native American
_____ Mixed Race/Multiethnic

PROGRAM SERVICES

Please select all applicable response(s).

4. Please indicate your primary reason for coming to the reentry program.

_____.

5. Please select the reentry program service(s) offered received.
____ Employment Advising
____ Housing Assistance
____ Advocacy Support
____ Individual Sessions with Intake Manager
____ Vocational Skills Advising
____ Basic Needs Assistance
____ Individual Mentoring and Tutoring

6. Please rate the following services you received with one (1) being the least useful and five (5) being the most useful.
____ Employment Advising
____ Housing Assistance
____ Advocacy Support
____ Individual Sessions with Intake Manager
____ Vocational Skills Advising
____ Basic Needs Assistance
____ Individual Mentoring and Tutoring

In this section I would like to know how participating in this reentry program impacted your likelihood of committing another crime within one year. Please select only one response for all questions.

7. The reentry program services offered assisted me in a successful transition back into the community after incarceration?
   ___Strongly Disagree
   ___Disagree
   ___Neither Agree or Disagree
   ___Strongly Agree
   ___Agree
   ___Don't Know

8. The reentry program services offered assisted me in overcoming the barriers I encountered after incarceration?
   ___Strongly Disagree
   ___Disagree
   ___Neither Agree or Disagree
   ___Strongly Agree
   ___Agree
   ___Don't Know

9. I would recommend the reentry program services offered to friends and family?
   ___Strongly Disagree
   ___Disagree
   ___Neither Agree or Disagree
   ___Strongly Agree
   ___Agree
   ___Don't Know

In this section I would like to know about your relationship with your case manager and your overall experience with the reentry staff. Please select only one response for all questions.

10. Did participating in this reentry program prepare me for life post-release?
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

11. Did participating in this reentry program reduce the likelihood that I will re-offend?
    __Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

12. I was actively engaged in developing my reentry service plan with my intake manager.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

13. I held myself accountable for reaching my short-term and long-term goals.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

As you are aware, being incarcerated for a felony impacts your ability to vote, receive housing, and other governmental services.

14. I feel that I am deprived and discriminated against as an African American male ex-offender because of my past criminal history.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

15. I feel that the reentry program services offered have given the necessary resources to assist me on how to deal with everyday problems.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

16. The reentry program services offered have provided me the necessary referrals for anger management.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

In this section, I would like to know about the educational opportunities and mental health resources made to you by the reentry program if any. Please select only one response for all questions.

17. I feel that the reentry program services offered have assisted me in advancing my educational opportunities.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

18. The reentry program services offered provided services that met my needs.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know

19. The reentry program services offered meets my expectations.
    ___Strongly Disagree
    ___Disagree
    ___Neither Agree or Disagree
    ___Strongly Agree
    ___Agree
    ___Don't Know