2-1-2019

Moving Toward A Holistic Understanding Of Recidivism

Michael Thomas Wilber
University of New England

Follow this and additional works at: https://dune.une.edu/theses

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

MOVING TOWARD A HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF RECIDIVISM

by

Michael Thomas Wilber

B.A. (LaSalle College) 1976
M.S.M. (Wilmington University) 1998

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education in Leadership

Portland and Biddeford, Maine

February 2018

Michael Thomas Wilber
February 2018
Educational Leadership

**MOVING TOWARD A HOLISTIC
UNDERSTANDING OF YOUNG ADULT RECIDIVISM**

ABSTRACT

The United States incarcerates more individuals per capita than any other nation. According to Porter, Bushway, Tsao, & Smith (2016),

> There are currently 2.1 million individuals detained in the correctional institutions in the United States. Young adults, individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, represent the smallest portion of the general population yet comprise the largest portion of the incarcerated population. Furthermore, African Americans comprise 13% of the general population of the United States but comprise 58% of the prison populations in the United States. Finally, the recidivism rate, the rate at which former inmates recriminalize and return to prison, has remained at 75% for the past 40 years. (p. 2)

The findings of Porter et al. are counter intuitive. First, young adults represent the highest demographic group among prison populations. Second, African Americans are disproportionately represented in prison populations, and finally, the recidivism rate for the last forty years is indicative of failed intervention programs, ineffective rehabilitation, and inadequate post-incarceration preparation.

This narrative study sought to create the foundation for a Holistic Understanding of Recidivism by interviewing three incarcerated, young adult, African American males who had multiple incarcerations. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism acknowledges the clinical definition of recidivism as a return to criminal behavior while proposing there is more to recidivism than recriminalization. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism submits that there

are four spheres of influence that affect young adult recidivism; pre-natal experience, family, education, and socio-economics.

The purpose of this study was to record and retell the pre-incarceration life experiences of the three incarcerated, young adult, African American males to further drive and explore the development of a holistic understanding of young adult recidivism. This study was framed within the context of the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provided the lens through which the findings of the study were understood. Because of the small sample size of the study, no generalizable knowledge can be gleaned from the study.

The findngs of the study did not always match the findings of other studies. Contrary to current literature, this study found no pre-natal substance use by any of the parents of the participants. However, the influence of drugs was an unintended but real finding of this study, but not as drug use as displayed by popular culture, but rather marketing for income and survival.

The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism widens the lens through which recidivism is understood. There is more to recidivism than the nano-second in time when recriminalization occurs. There are life forming events that occur leading up to the criminal act; events that impact individual thought and behavior. Changing the unwanted outcome of recidivism requires changing the interventions used to remediate recidivism as well as changing how recidivism is understood. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism provides such an instrument.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented
by

Michael Thomas Wilber

It was presented on

February 21, 2018

And approved by:

Brianna Parsons, Ed.D., Lead Advisor
University of New England

Michael Patrick, Ed.D., Secondary Advisor
University of New England

Michael Grossman, Ed.D., Affiliate Committee Member
Delaware Department of Education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my committee members, Dr. Brianna Parsons, lead advisor; Dr. Michael Patrick, secondary advisor; and Dr. Michael Grossman, my affiliate committee member; thank you for your guidance, your wisdom, your patience, and your unending belief in me and in my research. Each of you has been a rich blessing for me during this pinnacle experience. May I acknowledge my most sincere and humble, yet so insufficient, appreciation and thanks to Dr. Brianna Parsons, my lead advisor. Angels are supposed to be invisible spirits; you, Dr. Parsons, defy that characteristic. Your gentle presence but demanding resolve for excellence has been both challenging and rewarding. I pray, as I continue to pursue both scholarship and transformational change, that I represent myself with integrity, intellect, and strength. Thank you to a very special angel.

I am thankful for the outstanding work of my two editors and proofreaders. Adrienne and Priscilla, your work was masterful. My manuscript needed your gifts. Thank you.

The University of New England provided me the opportunity, the resources, and the academic platform to pursue a life-long dream of achieving a doctoral degree. My first contact with UNE was Dr. Michelle Collay. Dr. Collay is a preeminent scholar and wise administrator who validated my lifelong dream. Thank you. To every department and to every individual at UNE who was part of my journey, I thank you for your guidance and your efforts on my behalf.

Finally, I want to express a special thanks to my family. I did not travel this journey alone, nor did I endure the challenges of this journey alone. Without my wife, Ann Marie; my children, Kelly, Matthew, and Annie; and my grandson, Mikey; this improbable journey and this most humbling achievement would remain an unrealized dream. Your contributions to this great achievement have been many and significant. Your strength and your resolve have been much greater than mine. I love you, I cherish you, and I thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The seeds for this narrative study of incarcerated, young adult, African American males who have had multiple encounters with the criminal justice system were planted many decades ago, even before my ability to recall the events of my then young life. My Irish Catholic heritage is a great influence that is present even today. The unique blend of Catholic guilt, instilled at life's earliest moments and reinforced through eight years of Catholic elementary education; and the Irish need to lend a helping hand, to be a good neighbor, and to seek the best of life, even during its most difficult and challenging times, are deeply ingrained in my character. Even the tragic death of my mother, killed in a car accident when I was two years old, became a blessing that few can understand. Not only did God give me my own lifetime guardian angel, but I was blessed to be adopted, nurtured, and loved by the only mother I remember. I should have died that day. I was in the front seat of the car, a car with no seat belts. God had a different plan for me, one that would unfold in subtle, barely discernable ways throughout the next six decades of my life and is still unfolding today.

My life is like a collage of images stitched together with the rich blessings of family, the undeserved but cherished fruits of a loving God, and the humbling realization that education is power but it can be gentle, calm, peace filled, and transformative. I like change, not so much for me, but change that will help other people to think better, to communicate better, and to live better. Images affect me in both positive and negative ways simultaneously.

Patience was our baby sitter while we lived in Maryland. She was a tiny African American woman whose grandparents were slaves. Patience raised her four children as a single parent. Each of her children graduated from college. Patience was a gentle lady who would comfort us when we were hurt but correct us when we were wrong. I still admire and respect

her, yet I feel sad every time I recall the small shack she called home. I remember hurting inside every time we took her home.

Images are an important part of the person that I am today. Irish Catholic means practicing Catholic; Mass every Sunday and all Holy Days, Confession once a month, and being involved in the Church community. There is one thing that not only haunts me but also sustains me, the Crucifix, the image of Jesus of Nazareth nailed to a cross. Jesus, the Servant of humanity, an image of great joy and perpetual hope; Jesus, the Savior of humanity, an excruciating image of love, compassion, and humility. The Crucifix, the one place where joy and sorrow meet; the one image that depicts both gloom and glory; the intersection where heaven and earth join and become one; the doorway through which we find transformation and peace; that undefinable place where there are no more shackles, no more barred windows and locked doors, no more prisons of fear, hatred, or discrimination.

Images can be harsh yet revelatory. This narrative study of three incarcerated young adult African American males is the result of a unique and shocking image. January 14, 2013 was a typical morning. I had a 10:30 AM class teaching juvenile offenders. The class consisted of ten juvenile males working toward completion of their GED or high school diploma. To gain access to the juvenile dormitory I entered a six foot by ten foot cubicle through a locked door controlled by a security officer. I proceeded to the next locked door to identify myself to the security officer housed in the Bubble, a locked space reserved for security types and other prison administrators. Once approved by security I was admitted to the Juvenile Housing Unit. That was my routine every day for the previous six months, yet on January 14, 2013, something was different; something grabbed at the pit of my stomach. Looking into the common area of the juvenile dormitory there were five metal tables with four attached seats bolted to the floor and two metal picnic tables bolted to the floor. Behind the picnic tables, to the left of the Bubble,

were two stall showers where the inmates bathed. Along the outer perimeter of the dormitory were 20 cells (rooms), each six feet by twelve feet. Each cell contained a double decker metal bunk bed, a combination metal sink and toilet, and a desk and chair. Access into and out of the locked cells is controlled by a security officer in the Bubble. This is where we send our young people who have made mistakes, both small and large, to be rehabilitated, to make better decisions, to learn respect, and to understand human dignity.

Images can be cold and unwelcoming. The setting of this study is a maximum security, adult correctional facility located in the northeast United States. A maximum security correctional institution is used to detain the highest risk offenders, those awaiting trial and those already processed through the courts. This correctional institution is a single gender, all male facility. Enclosed within a perimeter of twelve-foot high razor wire capped cyclone fencing, the facility is a megalith of concrete, steel, barred windows, locked doors, and a para-military mindset that can change from a normal operational setting to complete isolation in an instant.

Images are a very important part of my life. The image of President John F. Kennedy, challenging a sleepy nation with youthful energy, a charismatic personality, and a contagious confidence that humanity's untapped potential could take us to outer space and back. The image, just a few short years later, of that same American patriot, slumped lifeless in the back seat of the presidential limousine, slain by an assassin's bullet.

The image of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, standing at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, rallying an apathetic nation immersed in systemic racism, reminding them that "Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children." Five years later, that humanitarian giant fell silent from an assassin's bullet. Today, in this country, there is still time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

The images of war and the unmerciful realities brought about by one man's hatred of another, and one country's errant belief that every nation in the world should embrace the form of government and the style of life it espouses has changed lives and devastated families for centuries. The Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear extinction. The undeclared war in Viet Nam cut short so many lives. The human casualties of that conflict became mere numbers inked into an "us versus them" scorecard. Young lives and old alike, destroyed, mutilated by land mines and silenced by the murderous thud of the opposition's bullets. Fallen patriots stuffed into body bags are returned to the homeland amid taunts of a war weary citizenry.

Images can be prophetic, inspiring, and frightening. Pope John Paul II, standing in the window of the papal apartment on the night of his election to the papacy—young, vibrant, relatively unknown, with arms outstretched embracing God's entire creation—ushered in a new age in Christianity and ecumenism proclaiming, "Be not afraid!" Only several years later, after recuperating from an attempted assassination from which he should have died, he entered the jail cell of the man who tried to kill him, sat down next to him, prayed over him, and forgave him.

Images are profound. Jails are images—images of misguided intentions to heal, images of good lives gone bad, images of acquiescence to failure, images of indifference to racial discrimination. The image I saw on January 14, 2013 was profound. It was all the above, hurt not healing, young lives trapped in endless cycles of failure, voiceless consumers and unresponsive bureaucracies. The most profound image of that day was the image of 10 juvenile students, 10 faces of color; and me, the only white person.

Images are not only profound; they are transformative. Never did I realize what was so obvious, that racism is rampant. Racism stares us in the face, yet we cannot seem to focus on its omnipresence. My life changed forever that day. My Irish Catholic heritage calls me to love as I

have been loved, to heal the wounds of sin and division, to visit the sick and the imprisoned, and to be the face of Christ to all I meet.

Images are profound and powerful. What we see is one thing. Our response to those images is yet another. Images can be an impetus for change. The message behind the image calls for action or nothing will change. To sit idly by and do nothing perpetuates the realities those images represent. This narrative study is my first step of many intended to bring about transformative change, one life at a time.

Understanding Recidivism

Recidivism is a term used to describe an ex-offender's return to the criminal justice system as the result of a violation of parole, recommitting crime, or some other violation of court mandated action. However, there are inconsistencies about a single definition of recidivism (Klofas, Ruggero, and Dougherty, 2015). *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus* (2014) defines recidivism as "a tendency to relapse into a previous condition; relapse into criminal behavior" (p. 897). Recidivism is an outcome-based metric that measures the rate at which ex-offenders return to the criminal justice system. Data is gathered at the three- and five-year post-incarceration anniversaries to calculate the rate of recidivism.

Current literature indicates that there is more to recidivism than the return to criminal activity (Wade, 2007; Esperian, 2010; Mottern, 2013). Davis and Bozick (2013) submit that understanding recidivism simply as a return to criminal activity by an ex-offender is an incomplete and flawed understanding of a phenomenon that will only yield flawed and incomplete outcomes. Furthermore, Loeber, Farrington, & Petechuk, (2013) suggested that there is a bridge age group of offenders who are transitioning from juveniles to adults, those 18 through 25-year-old offenders referred to as young adults (p. 3). The Council of State Governments Justice Center (2015), known as CSGJC, suggested that age 18 is not necessarily

the age when an individual becomes an adult; perhaps only legally, "young adulthood is a transitional period that can range from 18 to 24 and beyond, during which significant brain development is occurring and decision-making abilities are not fully mature" (p. 2). Velazquez (2013) reported that young adults accounted for 10% of the general population yet they comprise 29% of the corrections population. This study sought to discover the pre-incarceration life experiences of incarcerated young adult African American males, ages 18 through 25, which contributed to the recidivism of this age group.

Recidivism, when viewed as a success or failure benchmark, presents a powerful argument for continuing programs and interventions that have successfully addressed the needs of offenders and ex-offenders, or for reengineering programs that have failed to address those needs. Gaes (2008) as reported in The Leadership Conference, the nation's premier civil and human rights coalition, concluded that correctional education reduced recidivism and enhanced employment outcomes. LoBuglio & Lyman (2006) recommended "the goal of an ongoing study of recidivism is to produce more than the recidivism rate" (as cited in Ruggero, Dougherty, & Klofas, 2015). The broader purpose of such research should be to inform and support good correctional practices" (p. 6). The CSGJC (2015) reported that considerable research exists for adolescents and adult offenders, but such research does not exist for young adult offenders. The recidivism rate among this age group is 75%.

Problem Statement

The United States places more people in prison at a higher rate than any other developed nation. The Council of Economic Advisors (2016) reported there are currently 2.2 million incarcerated men and women in the United States (p. 6). The Council of Economic Advisors (2016) pointed out that figure represents 20% of the world's prison population while the United

States makes up less than 5% of the world's population. Taliaferro, Pham, & Cielinski (2016) reported:

> For low-income communities, the disparities are alarming. In 2014, the median annual income for people prior to incarceration was less than $20,000. Furthermore, Blacks and Latinos, who are disproportionately impacted by poverty, also have the highest rates of imprisonment and account for more than half of all prisoners … More than two-thirds of state prison inmates do not have a high school diploma. (p. 1)

The roots of these inequities are complex. There is the historic "pipeline to prison" which not only ensures many disadvantaged juveniles will end up in jail but that they will recidivate. Young adults, ages 18 through 25, comprise 13% of the general population and nearly 30% of the criminal justice population (National Institute of Justice, 2016). However, the CSGJC (2015) reported that "the recidivism rate of young adults is significantly higher than for other age groups . . . 76% of people under the age of 25 recidivated within 3 years of release and 84% recidivated within five years of release" (p. 3). This study attempted to elucidate the shared pre-incarceration life events common to the incarcerated young adult African American male participants to ascertain if there was a causal relationship between pre-incarceration life events, initial incarceration, and recidivism.

Travis (2015) reported that 90% of the people who are incarcerated will return to "communities and families located primarily in poor urban areas . . . 100,000 juvenile offenders return to these communities and families, and approximately 50% of the returnees are African American" (p. 4).   By identifying and addressing the root causes of young adult recidivism, the correction and education bureaucracies can effectively reduce recidivism rates within the largest correctional population group.

Recidivism is a term used to define an ex-offender's return to the criminal justice system as the result of re-criminalization. The NIJ (2016) reported:

> Recidivism is one of the most fundamental concepts in criminal justice. It refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in re-arrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release. (p. 1)

Within the context of recidivism lies the statistical characteristic that attributes rates of recidivism to the success or failure of rehabilitative, therapeutic, and educational interventions provided to inmates during incarceration. In that context, the causes of recidivism are the failed intervention programs provided by suppliers to the corrections systems. Travis, Western, & Redburn (2015), citing a four-decade failure rate as high as 75%, suggested that recidivism is larger than failed interventions—that root causes include prior life experiences, genetics, family structure, education, and generational suppression.

Recidivism is more than just the act of re-offending. Recidivism has causes. Once the causes are identified, solutions can be implemented. Travis et al. (2015) subscribe to the theory that some of the causes of recidivism include prior life experiences, family structure, education, and generational oppression. Young children born into families involved in the drug culture either as drug dealers or as consumers live in an environment that models that behavior as being acceptable. The child who lives in a parent-deprived environment has a higher likelihood of achieving at a lower academic threshold than a child whose parents are actively involved in the education process. The Critical Race Theory submits that racism is part of the character of the culture of the United States, and therefore a child of color, regardless of intellectual ability, family orientation, or socioeconomic status, is inherently stigmatized with these kinds of racially

motivated conditions. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism synthesizes these causes of

recidivism with the intent of further studies developing revised intervention programs designed

to reduce the recidivism phenomenon among the young adult age group.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study was to elucidate the pre-incarceration life experiences

of three incarcerated, young adult, African American males (ages 18 through 25), who have had

multiple encounters with the criminal justice system, to further drive and explore a Holistic

Understanding of Recidivism as shown in Appendix A. I developed The Holistic Understanding

of Recidivism as a model created to synthesize four areas of common life experiences: prenatal

experiences, family experiences, educational experiences, and socio-economic experiences.

The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism evolved from an image that transformed my

life. January 14, 2013 was a defining moment when my life was changed by a single image and

a conscience changing awareness. On that day I became aware that the innocence of my reality

when viewed through a different life experience and a different lens was flawed and incomplete.

Not only did I have to change, I was challenged by conscience to be an instrument of

transformative change.

The impetus for creating the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism came from the

writings of several scholars. Blessett (2014) succinctly enunciated employment and clean safe

communities as essential considerations for transforming the recidivism problem. Goldstein

(2016) and Velazquez (2013) proposed the restructuring of the current two track prison system

for juveniles and adults to a holistic triple track system of prisons with separate institutions for

juveniles, young adults, and adults. Including the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism in

program intervention development will produce updated and more relevant intervention

programs lowering recidivism rates for young adults. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism

evolved from recurring themes throughout the literature review (King & Elderbroom, 2014; Ruggero, Dougherty, & Klofas, 2015). The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism acknowledges the clinical definition of recidivism as the return to the criminal justice system by an ex-offender while also positing that there are causes that foster the propensity to recidivate; recidivism being the effect or outcome of those causes. The CSGJS (2015) encouraged policymakers and administrators in both juvenile and adult criminal justice systems to undertake studies and develop strategies to reduce recidivism and achieve better outcomes for young adults. Understanding recidivism from a holistic perspective will more effectively link potential solutions (interventions) to the problematic phenomenon, young adult recidivism.

Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative study was to document and synthesize the common lived experiences of three incarcerated young adult African American males to create a new paradigm for understanding the recidivism phenomenon among this young adult age group. There are four areas of interest that were documented: prenatal influences, family influences, socioeconomic influences, and educational influences. The goal of this narrative study was to record and share the lived experiences of the participants from their hearts, to see their lived experiences from their eyes, and to begin to understand their lived experiences through their souls. Consequently, the primary research question was:

RQ 1: What are the perceptions, lived experiences, and beliefs of incarcerated young adult African American males in a Maximum-security prison?

A complementary question was:

RQ 2: How do incarcerated, young adult, African American males understand and describe what caused them to recidivate?

Conceptual Framework

Ravitch and Riggan (2012) suggest there are three major parts to a conceptual framework. The first is the interest of the researcher. The second is topical research, empirical work that is about the topic of interest. The third element is the theoretical framework—the part that deals with specifics, that is tied to theories, or that creates theories tied to the research topic. (p. 10)

I framed this narrative study primarily within context of the Social Constructivist Theory. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) explained "the basic tenet of constructivism is that reality is socially, culturally, and historically constructed." Social Constructivism was a natural overarching framework for the Critical Race Theory (CRT) which postulates that racism is inherent in United States' society. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) noted:

> . . . our social world is not fixed, we construct with it words, stories, and silence. But we need not acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided. By writing and speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better, fairer world. (p. 32)

Blending the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory creates a new paradigm for understanding the phenomenon of recidivism among young adult, incarcerated, African American males.

The Social Constructivist Theory

The primary theoretical framework for this narrative study was the Social Constructivist Theory as cited in Creswell (2013, pp. 24–25). Creswell (2013) described social constructivism as seeking to understand the world in which one lives and works. Documenting the lived experiences of incarcerated young adult African American males will facilitate the development and growth of generalizable knowledge as a construct for the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism. Creswell (2013) suggested that the goal of research conducted within the social

constructivist theory is to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views . . . Rather than starting with a theory, inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning" (pp. 24–25). Therefore, I used interviewing as the primary means of obtaining and documenting the lived experiences of the young adult African American inmate participants.

The Critical Race Theory

A secondary theoretical framework I used for this narrative study was the Critical Race Theory (CRT). Parker and Lynn (2013) stated that the CRT "focuses theoretical attention on race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society" (as cited in Creswell (2013, pp. 31–32). Parker and Lynn (2013) also presented three main goals of CRT. The first goal of CRT is to present stories "by people of color" about discriminatory practices, helping to shatter 'majoritarian master narratives' (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 32). Second, CRT attempts to eradicate racial subjugation, understanding that racism is a social construct. Parker and Lynn (2013) explain that "race is not a fixed term but a fluid one, continually shaped by political pressures and informed by individual lived experiences" (p. 32). Third, CRT addresses other areas of difference such as gender, class, and inequities experienced by individuals. Creswell (2013) explained that the use of CRT methodology means that the "researcher foregrounds racism in all aspects of research; challenges traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color; and offers transformative solutions to racial and class subordination in institutional structures" (p. 32). CRT is a theoretical model that enables the researcher to examine perceived or real racism to understand how systemic racism affects its victims, and how to enable the victims to become agents of self and group transformational change.

The Servant Leader

The conceptual framework for this research was supported and impacted by a servant leadership paradigm. An integral part of this study was the narratives of three selected young adult, African American, volunteer male inmates ages 18 through 25. Blessett (2014) suggested that "citizenship, housing, employment, access to health care, clean and safe communities, nutritious food, and peace of mind and [education] are the key factors that need to be considered when attempting to transform and dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline" (p. 10). Through the retelling of the pre-incarceration life events of selected voluntary participants of incarcerated young adult males, the opportunity to broaden the understanding of recidivism and its causes will enable further research to address both the pre-incarceration needs of young adults as well as interventions during incarceration and post-release care.

The Hierarchy of Needs

The theoretical framework for this study of the pre-incarceration life experiences of three incarcerated, young adult, African American males evolved from the conjoining of the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory. The con-joined theories, in addition to my servant leadership character, provided a unique lens through which to conduct this narrative study. The bifocal lens of Social Constructivism and Critical Race Theory resulted in a retelling of lived experiences, anticipated and unanticipated findings, an awareness of the inherent racism in American society, and the need to root out racism wherever it is found. One question remained, "How do we begin to understand the impetus for the behaviors that were lived by the three incarcerated, young adult African American males?" I used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) to explain the overarching realities that prompted the actions of the participants and the family members who came before them, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) posited that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy:

> It is quite true that man lives by bread alone—when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled? At once other (and "higher") needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still "higher") needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency. (p. 375)

Understanding the behaviors of the three participants in this study requires the reader to probe deeper than their individual lives, even though this study was about their lives. What caused these young African American males to recidivate?

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

Assumptions

There are five assumptions that were an integral part of this study. First, that the Critical Race Theory is grounded in the belief that racism is a significant if only a subliminal part of the character of the United States' culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). I examined the research and findings of this study through the lens of the Critical Race Theory. Second, the Social Constructivist Theory is a valid theory through which individuals understand their unique reality. Third, due diligence was observed in being objective with the findings of the study and not subjective in view of the study's findings. This study was the product of a researcher who was molded in the servant leadership model. The nature of this leadership style lends itself to empathy for the follower. As a result, I was careful to ensure that empathy did not turn into sympathy; which would have skewed the findings of this study. The participants may have had different worldviews from each other and from mine. Fourth, each participant was briefed prior to the study and prior to each interview session that his participation was voluntary, and without stipulation, the honesty and integrity of the answers provided by the participants were taken at face value. The final assumption is that all participants answered questions honestly. I recused myself from the screening process to minimize the possibility of selection bias. The screening and selection process was administered through the Treatment Administrator at the correctional institution by the Legal Department in accordance with approved IRB and DOCRB standards, further minimizing the possibility of selection bias.

Limitations

The participants and the researcher did not have any previous or current contact with each other precluding the potential for bias or favoritism. The lead investigator recused himself from

the selection process limiting to the greatest extent possible any chance of selection bias. The screening process was conducted by the Legal Department of the participating institution.

Scope

The scope of this study was limited to four specific areas of the lived experiences of the three incarcerated, young adult, African American male participants: prenatal, family, education, and socioeconomic experiences. Obtaining generalizable knowledge was beyond the scope of this study; therefore, it is not possible to draw conclusions from the findings of this study. The findings of this study are intended to be the basis (incentive) for further studies about the feasibility of growing the potential of the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism.

<div align="center">

Rationale & Significance

</div>

The National Institute for Justice (NIJ) (2014) reported that the recidivism rate of ex-offenders at the three-year post release anniversary is 65% and at the five-year post release anniversary the rate is 85%. These rates have remained constant for 40 years. Furthermore, the NIJ (2014) reported that young adults, ages 18 through 25, comprise 10% of the general population yet are 30% of the incarcerated population. The recidivism rate for the young adult age group at the three-year post release anniversary is 76% and at the five-year post release anniversary is 86%. These outcomes are unsatisfactory and indicative of failed interventions and/or an incomplete understanding of the cause and effect relationship that exists between pre-incarceration life events and recidivism.

The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (NRCCFI) (2016), a consortium affiliated with Rutgers University, described the issue of parental incarceration as follows, "The growing number of children with an incarcerated parent represents one of the most significant collateral consequences of the record prison population in the U.S." (p. 1). Continuing, the report stated that one in nine African American children in the United

States have an incarcerated parent. Additionally, NRCCFI reported that parental incarceration increases the risk of children of incarcerated parents living in poverty or experiencing household instability. There is an exponential, unanticipated consequence of parental incarceration, the potential loss of income, as well as displacement of a second parent from the household because of unintended employment.

After 40 years of increasing mass incarceration, the criminal justice system in the United States is beginning to adjust to a new norm known as decarceration, a process to reduce incarceration (Pettus-Davis & Epperson, 2015). Connecticut reduced the use of incarceration for probation violators by 50% within two years by enacting legislation that required consideration of intensive supervision and services as the first alternative to incarceration for probation violations (Justice Center, 2011). Epperson and Pettus-Davis (2015, p. 4) reported the state of Connecticut saved "nearly $50 million [from its decarceration program] and reinvested it into behavioral health treatment services, community-based pilot projects, and other behavioral programs." Epperson and Pettus-Davis (2015) urge "continuous assessing of the effects of interventions at multiple levels" (p. 19). Finally, the authors propose new perspectives, transformed approaches, and trans-disciplinary paradigms to achieve decarceration. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism is such an approach.

What is at stake are human lives; lives that enter and reenter failure zones; broken families, failed education providers, generational economic oppression, and unresponsive rehabilitative interventions. Recidivism is the unwanted outcome that occurs over and over again. Young adults are reprocessed through correctional facilities. Economies of scales created by the criminal justice industrial complex flourish. Young adults flounder and fail.

Much more can be done at all phases of the lived experience to mitigate undesired outcomes. Educators and health care professionals can work collaboratively to mediate potential psychological issues. Family services and the judicial system can have a greater presence and

exert greater influence with dysfunctional families. Much more should be expected, and much more must be delivered.

Definition of Terms

Correctional institution—the term that is given to the prison or reformatory (Black, 1976)

Critical Race Theory—a progressive legal movement that seeks to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

Decarceration—the process of reducing the recidivism rate (Epperson & Pettus-Davis, 2015)

Hierarchy of Needs—a theory created by Maslow (1943) that explains five levels of human needs: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization; and how human beings meet those needs (Maslow, 1943)

Incarceration—imprisonment; confinement in a jail or penitentiary (Black, 1976).

Maximum security prison—a prison that does as much as possible to keep prisoners from escaping and watches them very closely (Merriam-Webster, 2017)

Racism—any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

Recidivism—a tendency to relapse into a previous condition; relapse into criminal behavior (Merriam-Webster, 2017)

Social Constructivist Theory—a way of understanding the world in which one lives and works (Creswell, 2013)

Young adult—an individual between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age (Goldstein, 2016)

Conclusion

Recidivism is one of the basic concepts of criminal justice (NIJ, 2014). Recidivism measures the return rate of ex-offenders back into the criminal justice system (NIJ, 2014). The recidivism rate for the past four decades has remained constant at 65% at the three-year post

release anniversary and 40% at the five-year post release anniversary (NIJ, 2014). Researchers and practitioners need to look deeper than the numbers and percentages. They need to feel the human element—the person who is trapped in a dehumanizing spiral of repeated self-destruction by an unresponsive bureaucracy.

The recidivism rate among the young adult age group (18 through 25 years of age) is staggering; 75% at the three-year post release anniversary and 86% at the five-year post release anniversary. The young adult age group comprises 10% of the general population and 30% of the criminal justice population. The Council of State Governments Justice Center (2015) reported that young adults are closer developmentally to juveniles than to adults, both mentally and behaviorally. These developmental realities require further study.

Chapter Two is a comprehensive literature review. The literature review presents historically significant and current scholarly works that elucidate the recidivism phenomenon among young adult incarcerated males and develops the conceptual framework for the study. Furthermore, the literature review suggests that further study is needed to fully understand the dynamics that contribute to the incarceration of the young adult age group.

Chapter Three introduces the methodology of this narrative study. The setting for this study is discussed in detail, with rich detail about the detainees residing in this maximum-security prison. The protection of the participants is clearly defined within the parameters set forth in the Protection of Human Subjects (2009). Data was limited to the four categories of this study; prenatal experience, family experience, education, and socio-economics. The only source for the data was the narratives of the participants. Analysis of data is not a defining criterion for the narrative study; rather the rich, thick narratives providing interconnected details is critical to this study. Finally, the chapter discusses the potential biases and how those biases will be managed in a way that does not cause misrepresentation of fact.

Chapter Four presents the stories of three incarcerated, young adult, African American males. Each participant has had multiple encounters with the correctional justice system. Their stories are retold within the complementary theoretical structures of the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory. Their stories are the basis for supporting and growing the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism.

Chapter Five reviews the primary and secondary questions that guided this study. Additionally, the findings of the study are discussed, and recommendations made to reengineer processes and programs, and to advocate for a greater problem-solving presence from organizations within the local community. Chapter Five concludes with recommendations for ongoing research to create a more robust understanding of the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism Model.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recidivism is a term used to describe the recriminalization of an ex-offender. Recidivism is also a statistical metric used to quantify the rate of recriminalization. *Webster's New World Basic Dictionary of American English* (1998) defines recidivism as "a tendency to relapse into a previous condition; relapse into criminal behavior" (Agnes, p. 897). Wade (2007) asserted that one issue particularly challenging to evaluating (various) studies is the lack of a consistent definition of recidivism. Scholars (Davis & Bozick, 2013; Esperian, 2010; King & Elderbroom, 2014) define recidivism differently, as re-incarceration, others as a return to crime, still others define recidivism as a violation of parole; however, there is not a universal understanding of recidivism. This study uses the following hybrid definition of recidivism: Recidivism is a quantifiable negative outcome by an ex-offender resulting in part from failed or ineffective interventions initiated during incarceration as well as pre- and post-natal experiences and other life experiences, which results in the ex-offender returning to the correctional justice system.

The focus of this literature review was synthesizing literature about young adult, African American male offenders, ages 18 through 25, and rethinking the phenomenon of recidivism of this age group. The correctional justice system has segmented offender populations into two groups, juvenile offenders and adult offenders. Juvenile offenders are typically youth under 18 years of age. Juvenile offenders are detained in separate facilities apart from adult offenders. Adult offenders are typically 18 years of age or older. Adult offenders are detained in correctional facilities that do not include juvenile offenders. Current literature (Goldstein, 2016) suggests that "the correctional justice system is moving in the direction of acknowledging and providing interventions for another age group, the young adult, individuals from 18 to 25 years of age" (p. 1). Current literature (CSGJC, 2015) supports the theory that the young adult age

group has unique characteristics and identifiable behavior patterns that warrant continued research to further explain this population and to develop appropriate intervention.

The purpose of this literature review was to compile and review scholarly literature from scholars, journals, books, dissertations, and conferences that elucidate the relationship among prenatal physiological events, socioeconomic realities, education, family life experiences, and recidivism, focusing on the young adult age group between 18 and 25 years of age. Second, this literature review sought to discover if there is a clearer panorama of recidivism than the current understanding of recriminalization. Third, this literature review linked intervention programs for incarcerated individuals and recidivism in an effort show the interrelatedness of the two and the need for more relevant intervention programs.

Young Adults

The Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2014) suggested that young adults, those individuals from age 18 through age 24, transition to adult in a very complex journey. The Forum reported that there were about 31.2 million young adults, ages 18–24, in the United States, about 13 percent of the adult population (p. 2). CSGJC (2015) noted that most violent crimes are committed by someone between 18 and 24 years of age. Carson and Golinelli (2014) reported that "in 2012, young adults comprised 21 percent of admissions (129,274 people) to adult state and federal prisons" (p. 3). CSGJC (2015) noted that young adults who were under the supervision of the justice system were more likely to have lower academic levels, significant reading deficiencies, and may qualify for special education services.

Travis et al., (2015) confirmed that the traditional institutional interventions of behavior modification, dependency therapy, and educational and vocational training have achieved unacceptably high failure rates, as high as 75% within five years of release to community, for the past four decades. Esperian (2010) explained that "the effectiveness of correctional intervention

programs is measured by recidivism rates" (p. 319). Recidivism has become a depository of failed interventions, broken lives, and missed opportunities. Research indicated that for reintegration of ex-offenders to be successful, education is an essential component. Literature (Bidwell, 2013; Davis & Bozick, 2013; Department of Justice, 2011) also indicated that un-credentialed ex-offenders (those lacking a high school diploma, a GED®, or vocational training) who attempted to reintegrate into society would not only recidivate but would do so at incrementally higher rates than ex-offenders who were credentialed. There is more to recidivism than failed intervention programs during periods of incarceration. There is life before incarceration, existence during incarceration, and outcomes after leaving prison.

Other literature indicated that there was more to recidivism than the return to criminal activity (Esperian, 2010; Mottern, 2013; Wade, 2007). The National Institute of Justice (2014) reported that "a study partnered by RTI International and Pennsylvania State University's Justice Center for Research is focusing on the theory of desistance and its relationship to reducing recidivism" (p. 1). Is it possible for an offender to become a non-offender without first renouncing the desire to commit crime? The issue is compounded by the fact that correctional education programs focus on traditional subjects such as reading, language arts, and mathematics; not decision making, transformational change, or post incarceration life skills.

Literature (Bidwell, 2013; Davis & Bozick, 2013; Department of Justice, 2011) suggested that there were two key needs for ex-offenders reintegrating into families, the workplace, and community: education and employment. Without an educational credential, high school diploma or GED, ex-offenders will become employment statistics, unable to find a job. Even with an education credential, an ex-offender with no work experience or skill sets finds the prospect of obtaining a job greatly diminished. Allocating scarce and diminishing prison education

resources more toward the real life needs of reintegrating ex-offenders will be a way to enhance the possibilities of employment for ex-offenders.

Recidivism, a quantifiable negative outcome by an ex-offender resulting in part from failed or ineffective interventions initiated during incarceration, as well as pre-and post-natal and other life experiences that result in the return of the ex-offender to the correctional justice system, is an unacceptable outcome of the incarceration experience. Current and emerging literature (Loeber et al., 2013) suggested there is an age group of offenders transitioning from juveniles to adults, between 18 and 25 years of age, referred to as young adults (p. 3). The focus of this literature review was to gather scholarly material on young adult African American male offenders that supports the theory redefining the traditional understanding of recidivism using a Holistic Model that includes prenatal experiences, family, socioeconomic status, and education (Appendix A). The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism was developed to synthesize those areas of pre-incarceration life experiences that contribute to recidivism among young adults. While there are individual authors who address one pre-incarceration life experience, this literature review did not find a source that synthesized the same four areas.

Defining Critical Life Stages

There were several themes that were consistent throughout the literature. First, the nanosecond in time paradigm of recidivism needs to be viewed through a new and wider lens (Esperian, 2010; Mottern, 2013; Wade, 2007). Second, education is an essential component of the successful reintegration formula. Gaes (2008) reported that "Strong observational studies support a conclusion that correctional education reduces recidivism and enhances employment outcomes" (p. 11). Third, Travis et al. (2015) reported the unacceptably high recidivism rates are outcomes generated by more than failed institutional interventions. Fourth, there was a direct cause and effect relationship between the amount of credentialed education an ex-offender

possessed and reduced recidivism. Hopkins (2013) reported that findings by RAND Corporation indicated "a prisoner who actively participates in correctional education programs is 43% less likely to become a repeat offender than a prisoner who did not get involved in the programs" (p. 1). Finally, Davis and Bozick (2013) suggested that understanding recidivism simply as a return to criminal activity by an ex-offender is an incomplete and flawed understanding of a phenomenon that will only yield flawed and incomplete outcomes. Aligning unique experiences to the different life stages links them in such a way that inferences can be made about cause and effect.

Life Stages and Their Influences

Literature (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013; Shively, 2016) suggested that there were effects that occur because of the environmental, social, psychological, and educational experiences of the human subject. These effects can be chronicled in specific life segments. Memories of early childhood traumatic experiences such as walking the streets at night, alone, because the mother was not home; recalling the fear of being left alone by the uncle who had won custody of him but had to leave home to go to work; and the instability of moving from one foster home to another. These experiences shape the life of the child.

Prenatal Influences

Current literature indicates the existing paradigm of recidivism was myopic (Conners, et al., 2003). There is more to recidivism, a return to criminal behavior after release (Esperian, 2010), than failed intervention programs during incarceration. Research is linking substance use and abuse by parents to impaired learning capacity and antisocial behavior in their children. Winters (2006) states "there is strong evidence demonstrating that parental substance or alcohol abuse increases a child's risk for behavioral problems that include drug and alcohol abuse, social

skills deficits, and low educational attainment" (p. 1). There are unintended consequences that may adversely affect children of substance using parents.

Furthermore, the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress (2014) gave credibility to the theory that there is a connection between parental substance using/abusing parents and adverse effects on their children. Causes of adverse effects on children include reduction in positive life experiences, income, parental presence, and the presence of other biological, developmental, and behavioral problems. Conners et al. (2003) explained that "studies examining the effects of prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol on the health and early development of children are making clearer the biologic vulnerability of children born to addicted mothers" [and fathers]. (pp. 744). Conners et al. (2003) further stated, "The current literature suggests that there is a linear relationship that builds upon prenatal and postnatal environmental factors" (pp. 744–745). In other words, postpartum life experiences can be traced directly back to in utero experiences. Solis, Shadur, Burns, and Hussong (2012) tempered their suggestion that there may be a direct link between parental substance use or abuse and academic challenges faced by their offspring by stating that the results of studies were not consistent. However, Solis, Shadur, Burns, and Hussong (2012) did not agree with Conners et al. (2003) that impaired learning capacity and tendencies toward antisocial behavior result from substance using or abusing parents.

From the Chromosome to the Correctional Facility

The children of substance abusing parents have a higher probability of exhibiting socially undesirable behaviors than their peers. Included among those undesirable behavior patterns are substance dependency/abuse, antisocial tendencies, deficit disorders, and impaired learning capacity. The incidents of these undesirable behaviors increased in recent decades.

Mitchell, Wilson, & MacKenzie (2007) reported, "In the United States approximately 40% to 45% of prison inmates have a history of substance abuse" (p. 354). The authors contend that without effective treatment, many [former inmates] were likely to re-offend (recidivate) after release. The period of incarceration is thus a critical opportunity to implement correctional interventions. Interventions must be realistic, targeted to this population, and other-goal oriented, taking into consideration the genetic predisposition of these individuals. Individual education plans (IEP) are mandated for individuals under the age of 21 who have diagnosed learning disabilities. Because they attain the legal age of 21 does not mean their diagnosed learning disability is corrected. Yet these individuals are enrolled in regular ABE, GED and high school diploma classes with no accommodations.

Children of Substance Abusing Parents

The effects of substance abuse by parents is a prolific problem. Hussong et al. (2008) estimated that "11% of all children live in families where one or more parents abuse alcohol or other drugs . . . some studies estimate that as many as half of these children will develop a substance use disorder by young adulthood" (p. 2). The use of alcohol and drugs has reached a plateau of casual indifference among many. Children of parents who are substance abusers are more likely to experience substance dependency disorders than their peers. Solis et al. (2012) stated that "children of substance abusing parents are more than twice as likely to have an alcohol and/or drug use disorder themselves by young adulthood compared to their peers" (p. 1). Alcohol and/or drug use by one or both parents has the potential to be, and in many cases, is, the gateway to creating dysfunctional children, either in-utero or postpartum (Solis et al., 2012).

The impact of substance use/abuse by parents on their offspring is alarming. Fahey (2017) reported that the Department of Services for Children of the State of Delaware received 431 reports of substance exposed infants. She added that in 2016 the perinatal program helped

84 mothers and moms-to-be and 69 infants. Explaining the magnitude of the problem and its epic increase over time, Fahey explained that from 2003 to 2012, the number of babies born drug dependent in the United States increased almost fivefold (Fahey, 2017, p. 3). The economic cost of hospitalization for drug-dependent babies in 2012 was $1.5 billion. Finally, Fahey reported that 55% to 94% of newborns exposed to opioids in utero develop addiction symptoms (p. 3).

Children of Incarcerated Parents

Children with impaired learning capacity and tendencies toward antisocial behaviors created a new set of circumstances needing the attention of society at large, and education and correction bureaucracies specifically. How do parents adapt to their new norm? What, if anything, does government do to create supportive programs such as pre-care, day care, relevant curricula, school to work vocational programs, after-care for children with impaired learning capacities and or prevalence to antisocial behaviors? Travis et al. (2015) reported that "from 1980 to 2000, children with incarcerated fathers increased from about 350,000 to 2.1 million— about 3% of all U. S. children. From 1991 to 2007, children with a father or mother in prison increased 77% and 131% respectively" (p. 4). As prison populations increase, the potential to have more children impacted by that phenomenon increases.

Nationwide dropout rates indicate that educational delivery systems have failed to effectively service these affected children and young adults (Esperian, 2010). Many of these children and young adults end up in the criminal justice system where their conditions are often correctly diagnosed but ineffectively addressed. These individuals who are genetically predisposed to impaired learning capacity and/or a tendency toward antisocial behavior manifest their behavior in the prison classroom setting. The educational delivery systems currently in use are not addressing the specific conditions and needs of this learning population.

Life before Incarceration

Several studies (Esperian, 2010; Mottern, 2013; Wade, 2007) suggested that a new paradigm—a more holistic view—of recidivism was needed for a clearer understanding of young adult recidivism. Recidivism is an actual event that occurs at a specific moment in time. The outcome of the recidivist act is the turnstile to reincarceration. The path to recidivism is much longer than ineffective behavior modification intervention during incarceration; the path to recidivism is part of one's total lived experience. It is larger than ineffective therapeutic intervention and larger than outdated educational delivery models that cling to past practices at the expense of the promise of technology aided instruction and prison-to-work initiatives.

The path to recidivism begins long before the first walk through the booking and receiving turnstile at a correctional facility. Haskins (2015) asserted that certain early life experiences have significant impacts on the psychological, emotional, and behavioral health of children. Research has demonstrated a profoundly negative impact on children whose fathers are incarcerated (Haskins, 2015). Expanding the definition of recidivism to include pre-incarceration events, incarceration and intervention, and post-incarceration outcomes will facilitate the growth of the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism. A robust understanding of recidivism will encourage the change needed to reengineer intervention programs. Recidivism, when viewed as an isolated moment in time, becomes a self-contained, all-inclusive event that simply occurs, without beginning or end. Wade (2007) suggested that:

> . . . Because recent studies have created such a muddled picture, a better way to evaluate programs is necessary. If the purpose of educational programs is to train individuals to become productive members of society, then future research should focus on measuring inmates' educational gains, aligning individual potential to realistic job training, creating

apprenticeship programs that lead to actual employment opportunities . . . and analyzing

statistics correctly. (p. 31)

Recidivism is a complex phenomenon. It involves more than an act of recriminalization. The

human experience is part of understanding recidivism holistically.

Existence during Incarceration and Intervention

The state of correctional education as measured by the metric of recidivism has remained

a constant concern for more than 40 years (Travis et al., 2015). Lockwood, Nally, Ho, &

Knutson (2012) reported that "the recidivism rate of offenders with a college education is 31%,

but the recidivism rate increased to 55.9% among the offenders who had an education below

high school" (p. 381). Lahm (2009) suggested that "greater attention and interest have been

given to funding substance abuse and anger management programs . . . they can be offered on a

shorter term and for less money than educational and vocational training" (p. 38). Taking the

path of least resistance to maintain funding dollars, then diverting those funding dollars to more

politically palpable programs, does not produce the intended employability outcomes for ex-

offenders, does not curb the post release substance dependency as hoped for, and does not

diminish the post release crime rate attributed to substandard educational achievement by former

inmates. The time has come to rethink the complexities of recidivism. Velazquez (2013)

acknowledged the multiple high costs associated with incarcerating young adults ". . . the total

per person [young adult] averages $31,286 per year, at over 200,000 young adults in prison, the

annual cost of their incarceration is over $6.25 billion" (p. 1). Appropriated funding for

corrections and correctional programs need to be allocated for effective rehabilitative

intervention programs that result in both short term and long term reduced recidivism rates.

Lockwood et al. (2012) and Travis et al. (2015) indicated that education is an essential

component for successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society as productive, self-sufficient,

and crime free citizens. Literature also indicated that ex-offenders who attempted to reintegrate into society without an educational credential (GED®, high school diploma, or vocational training) did not only recidivate, but did so at incrementally higher rates than ex-offenders who were credentialed. Former Secretary of Education Duncan stated that "Correctional education programs provide incarcerated individuals with the skills and knowledge essential to their futures. Elected officials dis-interpret data and continually slash funding for correctional intervention programs, particularly education funding" (as cited by Bidwell, 2013, p. 2). The concept of credentialing inmates with a GED® or high school diploma needs to be re-thought in terms of individuals who either are genetically predisposed to think differently than their peers or who do not have the capacity to think at the same levels as their peers. The education establishment should collaborate with businesses to generate new credentialing outcomes, to establish new norms for employability, and to support prison to work initiatives.

Education and Recidivism

This literature review supported the postulate that education is an essential component of a successful reintegration formula (Davis & Bozick, 2013; Hopkins, 2013). The current reintegration program is ineffective. Davis & Bozick (2013) determined that "a prisoner who actively participates in correctional education programs is 43% less likely to become a repeat offender (recidivate) than a prisoner who did not get involved in the programs" (p. 1). The study suggested that more than half of all United States prisoners are recidivists and therefore such a reduction would be significant. Hopkins (2013) reported that "while we now have proof that correctional programs benefit society and decrease crime rates, the optimal correctional education program is unknown" (p. 1). Correctional organizations and prison education administrators need to work collaboratively to usher in technology driven education curricula,

enlarge vocational technical training, and create learning environments more closely aligned with the needs of adult learners.

This literature review began as a study to research blended learning in Adult Basic Education (ABE) correctional settings. Throughout the literature review process recidivism became a common link to program funding, to instructional outcomes, and to program failure. RAND Corporation's (2013) meta-study presented three significant conclusions regarding correctional programs and recidivism. First, there was failure to achieve the overall goals of correctional intervention programs, i.e., to change behavior, to therapeutically reduce dependency, and to build positive decision-making skill sets through education. Second, research focused on recidivism only through the lens of a return to criminal activity. Finally, repeating failed interventions with the intent of achieving different (improved) results is mere folly.

Recidivism is a complex, multidimensional event tantamount to a repository of failed interventions initiated to change or modify undesirable actions, skill sets, and dependencies. Recidivism is the outcome produced by an ex-offender who commits crime, decides that existence inside a correctional facility is favorable to life in society, or who makes an ill-informed decision due to an in-utero disruption and/or past life experiences, inadequate education, a lifetime of suppressed economic opportunity, and a sense of predetermined and perpetual failure. The causes of recidivism extend beyond the parameters of failed institutional interventions. Broken families, incarcerated parent(s), mutated genetics from substance abusing parents, economic distress, and inferior role models are all part of the life experience of many pre-incarcerated individuals.

What Is Not Working?

It is clear there are issues and faults within the intervention process. The definition of successful intervention in quantitative terms was not established as part of this research. Mitchell et al. (2007) reported five key findings from their meta-analysis:

- The re-offending rate for participation in drug treatment programs was estimated to be around 42% to 50%; with only modest reduction in post-treatment re-offence

- Therapeutic communities exhibited the strongest and most consistent reductions in drug relapse and recidivism;

- Residential substance abuse treatment and group counseling programs were effective in reducing re-offending but not drug use;

- Narcotic maintenance programs may reduce drug use but not re-offending; more research is needed on this topic;

- Correctional boot camps for drug offenders were ineffective in reducing both re-offending and drug relapse. (p. 3)

The findings of Mitchell et al. (2007) affirmed the effectiveness of therapeutic communities in both reduction of drug relapse and recidivism. The other intervention methods produced inconsistent outcomes.

The root cause of what is not working may be a systemic issue, common among the types of interventions: behavioral, therapeutic, and instructional. The missions of correctional institutions and educational institutions are by nature a subliminal, unintended oxymoronic relationship. Correctional institutions promote safety and security through restrictive movement, authoritarian rule, and predetermined punishment. Educational endeavors espouse vigorous thinking, rewards for success, and challenging paradigms. Shively (2016) stated "One of the obstacles inherent in the correctional environment is the culture clash between the institution, the

individual, and the intervention program" (p. 12). Shively (2016) proposed that relationship

building is at the core of successful interventions: "inmates have been numbers all their lives;

they want more, they need more, they act out for more. They need relationships" (p. 16).

Relationship building must be embraced at the lowest level of intervention initiatives while being

encouraged from the executive levels of the bureaucracies.

Student inmates need good relationships with prison staff, teachers, and program

interventionists. Mottern (2013) suggested, "The educational alliance, the partnership of teacher

and corrections student, creates a relationship, a chiasm, between teachers and students" (p. 6).

Mottern further clarified, "Corrections students have a different world-view, a different self-

view, and a different needs hierarchy. It is these different views that require relationship

building" (p. 6). Adult education teachers need to meet their correctional students at the

student's level. Doing so is critical to the success of the educational alliance, the chiasm.

The Pew Foundation (2013) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of longer

versus shorter incarceration terms and the results were both informative and provocative:

> First, from 1990 to 2009 the time behind bars increased from 2.1 years to 2.9 years.
>
> Second, prison terms for drug offenders grew at nearly the same rate (36%) as those for
>
> violent offenders (37%) over the same period. Third, Michigan had the longest average
>
> time served, 4.3 years. Finally, the additional time served by offenders released in 2009,
>
> compared to those released in 1990, costs states more than $10 billion. (pp. 1–2)

The expenditure of funds to feed, clothe, and shelter prisoners, regardless of the level of crime

they committed, is a significant number. Legislatures should work to find ways to reduce the

high levels of incarcerations. Reducing incarceration rates will positively affect spending levels.

Voiceless Consumers, Unresponsive Suppliers

There is a compelling argument for the possibility that one of the causes of recidivism is that the young adult inmate is a voiceless consumer who is paired with an unresponsive supplier, the collaborative service bureaucracies (Hopkins, 2013; Mottern, 2013; Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013). Thus, more funding is necessary to improve the relevance and quality of prison education programs, yet funding for programs continues to be cut. Lockwood et al. (2012) reported that the profile of the prison population has been consistently characterized as economically poor, educationally illiterate, and socially inadequate to societal norms. They further stated that a disproportionate number of released offenders were unemployed due to their educational illiteracy and lack of vocational skills to meet the demands from a variety of job sectors (p. 382). The cycle of illiteracy and lack of vocational skills perpetuates the turnstile of recidivism.

Bureaucrats are aware that an overwhelming number of inmates have limited reading skills or cannot read at all and that many inmates possess mathematics skills at less than the 3rd grade functioning level. Often these very inmates do not possess the skill sets needed to articulate their needs. An individual functioning at the 3rd grade level falls short of being able to effectively communicate financial problems and may not be able to navigate the digital maze often encountered in online communications. The Obama administration, through the Attorney General's office under the leadership of Eric Holder, convened a cabinet level re-entry council on January 5, 2011. The purpose of the council was to address short- and long-term goals through enhanced communication, coordination, and collaboration across federal agencies (Department of Justice, 2011, p. 1). This initiative is an opportunity for the voiceless inmates to have a vocal expression at the highest levels of government. More research is needed to determine the effectiveness of this initiative. Holder (2011) commented that reentry provides a major opportunity to reduce recidivism . . . by developing effective, evidence-based reentry

programs, we can improve public safety and community well-being (p. 2). It is this kind of evidence-based programming that will be instrumental to reducing the recidivism rate.

What Is Working?

Several studies (Davis & Bozick, 2013; Esperian, 2010; Lockwood et al., 2012) supported the hypothesis that education is the key to successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society. The role of government is to protect its citizens. Yet legislators have reduced funding for prison education every year since 1995, and the recidivism rate or crime rate of ex-offenders within the first three years post release hovers at 65%. Bidwell (2013) reported that "educational programs cost about $1,400 to $1,744 per inmate each year. Education programs can save between $8,700 and $9,700 per inmate, costs associated with re-incarceration" (p. 1). Not only will education reduce recidivism rates, it will also reduce spending.

There is sparse literature about blended learning and technology aided education in corrections classrooms. Support for these education interventions is strong. Lockwood et al. (2012) stated "the benefits of correctional education to the post release employment among offenders have been widely recognized . . . the success of correctional education is largely measured by the recidivism rate and the offender's employability on release" (p. 381). Many inmates are in dire need of employability skills. They also need to be credentialed with a GED®, a high school diploma, or a vocational credential. If only basic education courses are offered the student inmate is at a distinct disadvantage. Additionally, the need for technology and secure access to computers is essential to life in the 21st century.

Moving Forward

There are many causes of recidivism (Davis & Bozick, 2013; Department of Justice, 2011; Pew Foundation, 2013) poor education, ineffective behavior modification programs, lack of employment for former prisoners, the detrimental impact of substance use or abuse,

generational socioeconomic suppression, and unstable family structures. RAND Corporation (2013) concluded, in its mega-study, new programs need to replace the failed programs of the present. One of the recommendations of the RAND Corporation's study was that education was an essential part of any recidivism reduction program.

Changing Mindsets, Student Centered Learning Paradigm

The stagnant outcomes of current programs and interventions need to be evaluated and modified to meet the needs of incarcerated individuals. It is no longer acceptable to deny the relevance and necessity of introducing technology into correctional education and literacy as part of the delivery model. The 21st century world is a digital world, driven by technology. If former inmates are to have a chance at reintegrating into society successfully they will need to have a working knowledge of today's technology: the cell phone, cell phone banking, online bill payment, life-long learning on the Internet, and how to apply for a job online. It is important to remember that inmates do not just temporarily visit a correctional facility, the prison becomes their home for many years. During incarceration, many inmates are totally removed from technology. Inmates may not have open access to the internet, but an offline pilot program may offer everything from literacy classes to vocational training and financial literacy seminars. The collaborating bureaucracies need to agree on a common goal, produce a set of strategic operational guidelines, and proceed with improved interventions and the assurance of continued quality security systems.

A new mindset needs to be adopted regarding recidivism. While a single act at a single moment is the act of recidivism there is much more to understanding recidivism. As with any cause and effect relationship recidivism has a before, during, and after timeframe. It is increasingly critical to discover those three timeframes on an individual inmate basis.

Meaningful intervention programs will result when individual holistic demographics are included as part of a base line evaluation of current practices.

Students will no longer be mere consumers of prepackaged learning modules, they will be integral voices who will have significant input into what they learn, when they learn, and how they learn. As education becomes more about life-long learning and less about accumulation of facts, the delivery models will of necessity change from text books to technology. Donnini (2015) contends that employing strategies for providing voice and choice allows learners and educators to co-create an engaging instructional experience based on collaboration (pp. 7–8). As greater numbers of traditional schools embrace newer and more technology-based applications and inclusive learning models, the corrections populations will have a greater number of student inmates exposed to learner-centered models. That in itself may begin to force a change in how education is delivered.

From Prison to Productive Employment

How an individual thinks about employment may have significant bearing on how well or poorly one does when employed. Musgrove, Derzis, Shippen, & Brigman (2012) developed an in-house program, Preparing Inmates for Reentry through Assistance, Training, and Employment Skills (PIRATES), which focused on improving dysfunctional career thoughts. They used the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) to measure negative or dysfunctional employment thoughts of a study group. Results of the CTI became the baseline for the group. Results of the PIRATES group found dramatic decreases in the number of negative or dysfunctional employment thoughts (p. 9). In house programs such as PIRATES are needed to learn how inmates think about employment but also to utilize vocational training to prepare inmates for their eventual reintegration.

Charitable organizations are a potential source of funding for innovative programs to assist with both in house and post release reintegration. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (2008) funded a $15 million project in Chicago's Garfield Park neighborhood. The program named Safe Return, was designed to reduce recidivism by involving the entire community. Community leaders, corrections administration, and program intervention managers must be able to establish effective lines of communication, create new paradigms, and establish achievable, meaningful goals. There is a need for follow up research on Safe Return, but it has the potential to be a model for the 21st century.

Theoretical Framework

This narrative study worked within the overarching construct of the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory. Creswell (2013) described social constructivism as *interpretivism* (p. 24). He continued, stating that social constructivism is "another worldview . . . individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work . . . the goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the views of the participants" (pp. 24–25). The Social Constructivist Theory provided a framework that facilitated a natural environment in which the participants were able to tell their stories as they understood them.

Social Constructivist Theory

The Social Constructivist Theory postulates that reality is interpretive, placing emphasis on people's everyday actions and the language used to express those actions. Andrews (2012) explains social constructivism as "regarding the social practices people engage in as the focus on inquiry" (p. 6). Andrews continues, "social constructivism accepts that there is an objective reality . . . how knowledge is constructed and understood" (p. 1). Hammersley (1992) suggested that "reality is socially defined but this reality refers to the subjective experience of everyday life, how the world is understood rather than the objective reality of the natural world," as cited

in Andrews (2012). Steedman (2002) stated "most of what is known and most of the knowing that is done is concerned with trying to make sense of what it is to be human, as opposed to scientific knowledge" (p. 40). The goal of this narrative study was to record and retell the stories of the three participants' lived experiences as they understood the reality of their individual lives.

Critical Race Theory

Undergirding the Social Constructivist framework was the Critical Race Theory (CRT) which according to Parker and Lynn (2002) as cited in Creswell (2013, p. 25) "focuses theoretical attention on race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society." Parker and Lynn cite three main goals of CRT:

> present stories of discrimination from the perspective of people of color; the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct; finally, addressing other areas of difference such as gender and class, challenging established norms and offering transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination in our societal and institutional structures. (p. 32)

The Critical Race Theory provided a unique lens through which to view the lived realities of the three African American participants.

The Critical Race Theory contends that racism is inherent in the culture of the United States; that while intended or not, actions carry with them indicators of racism. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) conjectured that sometimes actions are mere rudeness or indifference, and at other times racism seems deliberate. The Critical Race Theory "is interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 1). According to Delgado & Stefancic there are three basic tenets of the Critical Race Theory. First, racism is ordinary; it is the usual way society does business. Second, our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material. A third tenet of the

Critical Race Theory is the social construction thesis, which holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations.

Young adults are individuals from age 18 through 25. Young adulthood can be a time when young people pursue a college degree, move away from family and start their adult life, become engaged and marry, start a family, and begin a career. Young adulthood is a transition period, a time when young people evolve from juveniles to adults; a time when the juvenile mind is still developing; a time when impulsive behavior is still prevalent; and a time when the human brain is still developing to its full potential (Velazquez, 2013). Velazquez (2013) commented, "Young adulthood, 18–24 years old, can be a time of growth and opportunity" (p. 1). For some young adults, this life period can be less than opportune, filled with problems, blemished with encounters with the criminal justice system, however a significant number of young adults who become involved with the criminal justice system. While young adults account for 10% of the general population this age group comprises 29% of the corrections population.

Recidivism is a term used traditionally to quantify the return to criminal activity by an ex-offender. Recidivism is a negative outcome produced by failed interventions during the period of incarceration as well as life experiences encountered before and after birth. Literature suggests that there is more to recidivism than failed interventions during incarceration. Pre-incarceration experiences that contribute to young adult incarceration and recidivism include in-utero unintended consequences, family, socioeconomic factors, education, and multigenerational suppression of opportunity. Recidivism is measured at post-incarceration incremental periods of one, three and five years.

Recidivism rates vary depending on the age group. This research was focused on young adult African American males who are incarcerated in a maximum security correctional facility located in the Northeastern United States. A maximum security correctional facility houses the

highest risk offenders. Offenders are initially assigned housing based on whether or not they are processed in the court system. The maximum security correctional facility where the study took place houses death row inmates and has an execution chamber on site. The CGSJC (2015) reported that recidivism rates for individuals under the age of 25 were significantly higher than other age groups. Durose, Cooper, & Snyder (2014) indicated that 76% of ex-offender young adults who were under the age of 25 when released from prison recidivated within three years, and 84% recidivated within five years (as cited in CGSJC's studies). These recidivism rates acknowledged failed interventions by the correction system or some other causality. Petersilia (2011) argued that the correction system failed to correct, reporting that the above statistics have remained constant for the 40 years of record keeping.

Repeating the same failed programs and policies will result in more unchanged lives, greater and continued safety risks to communities, increased costs of incarceration, and negligent use of limited economic resources. The correctional system intervention initiatives of the past 40 years have consistently failed at an unchanging rate (Esperian, 2010.; RAND Corporation, 2013). The time is here to expand the parameters of recidivism to include those pre-incarceration life experiences that contribute to the disproportionate representation of young adult African American males in the criminal justice system.

Petersilia (2011) suggested that today's offenders are not the same as those of years gone by. Today's offenders are predominately male, African American or Hispanic, unskilled, and poorly educated. Corrections professionals, therapists, and educators can no longer ignore the sociological, economic, educational, and physiological and psychological factors that contribute to incarceration and recidivating. Rather than defining recidivism as only a negative outcome-based metric, bureaucrats would do well to enlarge the recidivism paradigm to a more holistic model that includes pre- and post-birth unintended consequences, education, socioeconomic

reality, family structure, multigenerational suppression, and incarceration experiences and events that drive the undesired outcome to occur.

Clinical versus Holistic Understanding of Recidivism

The traditional model for understanding recidivism, Appendix B, involves incarceration, life after release from prison, re-criminalization, and re-incarceration. This model focuses on a nanosecond in time referred to as re-criminalization, the moment when an ex-offender recommits a crime based on conditions of parole, breaking the law, or violation of a court mandated provision of release. The traditional model for understanding recidivism is a single lens operational model. However, there is more to recidivism than a single act committed. Those few seconds of action are but part of a larger picture. The National Institute of Justice (2014) reported that a study partnered by RTI International and Pennsylvania State University's Justice Center for Research focused on the theory of desistance, the deliberate and conscious decision to renounce criminal activity, and its relationship to reducing recidivism (p. 1).

The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism as shown in Appendix A reframes the parameters of the recidivism phenomenon to include prenatal influences and other life experiences, socioeconomic realities, education, and family experiences. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism acknowledges that there are negative inputs—the various life experiences—that produce the outcome, recidivism. Viewing recidivism through the lens of a holistic model created a broader platform from which to understand the phenomenon.

The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism will broaden the parameters of the current technical definition of recidivism (Appendix B). First, the holistic understanding includes prenatal, family, socioeconomic, and educational influences that contribute to developmental behaviors that are explained through the framework of Social Constructivist Theory. Second, the Holistic Understanding broadens the parameters for understanding recidivism thus enabling a

more thorough study of the causes of recidivism. Third, a broader theoretical framework enables analysis of the causes of recidivism and the opportunity to design and introduce more age appropriate pre-incarceration and incarceration interventions. Finally, the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism will allow pre-incarceration intervention and therapy promoting stronger health and reducing incarceration levels.

Conclusion

Recidivism is a quantifiable negative outcome by an ex-offender resulting in part from failed or ineffective interventions initiated during incarceration as well as pre- and post-natal experiences and other life experiences which result in recidivism. Recidivism, the return to criminal activity by an ex-offender, has remained constant for more than 40 years (Esperian, 2010). The Pew Center on the States (2011) analyzed the return of ex-offenders to prison for 33 states for inmates released in 1999 and 41 states for inmates released in 2004 making the study the most comprehensive analysis of returns to prison ever done. The report compared earlier studies on recidivism conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice for 15 states for inmate releases in 1983 and 1994 and concluded that recidivism rates have consistently remained around 40%.

Young adults, ages 18 through 25, represent a disproportionate number of incarcerated individuals (Velazquez, 2013). According to Velazquez (2013), young adults make up about 10% of the general population, but 29% of the arrests. In most states, young adults are detained with adult offenders; are tried in adult courts; and are provided the same intervention resources as adult offenders. Velazquez (2013) contends that the young adult brain is still in developmental stages and is more like the juvenile brain than it is like the adult brain.

Depending on the educational level of ex-offenders and the post release time period, recidivism rates range from 33% to over 60%. RAND Corporation's (2013) mega-analysis

reported that recidivism rates increased with less education and decreased with more education. RAND (2013) reported that offenders who participated in education had a 43% lower chance of recidivating as well as a 13% higher chance of post incarceration employment.

The substantive causes of recidivism are family structure, genetic predisposition to dysfunctional behavior, low self-esteem, poor mental health, multigenerational economic deprivation, and educational deficiency. RAND (2013) explained that "correctional education programs provide incarcerated individuals with skills and knowledge essential to their future" (p. 2). The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that states are spending less on corrections education programs now than in 1982, despite higher overall corrections spending during that time, as cited in RAND (2013). Spending on education in 1982 accounted for 33% of total state expenditures, but dropped to 29% in 2010, the lowest it has been in three decades. The trend of diminishing funding for corrections education must be reversed if the needs of young adult offenders are to be effectively met.

Recidivism is an outcome based statistical measure. There is more to recidivism than failed interventions during incarceration. Formative events happened before recidivism which shape the post-incarceration outcomes. Ineffective family structures, multigenerational suppressed economic opportunities, prenatal and postpartum unintended consequences, and education are all causes of young adult recidivism. The unacceptably disproportionate rate of incarceration and recidivism among young adult, African Americans begs for a new, holistic model of the causes of recidivism that will empower ongoing research, provide funding for development of new and more relevant intervention programs prior to incarceration, elucidate the need for increased funding for corrections education, and bring about transformative change; all in effort to enable incarcerated young adult, African American males new hope, improved post-incarceration skill sets, and greater life opportunities resulting from improved education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this narrative study was to elucidate the pre-incarceration life events of three young adult, African American male inmates, ages 18 through 25, incarcerated in a maximum security correctional facility located in the northeast United States. The study was framed within the Social Constructivist Theory as cited in Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) and the Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This study was viewed through the eyes of a servant leader to further understand and explore the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism, which acknowledges the clinical definition of recidivism as the return to the criminal justice system by an ex-offender (NIJ, 2014), while also positing that there are pre-incarceration life events that foster the propensity to recidivate; recidivism being the effect or outcome of those events or causes. Furthermore, it theorizes that life experiences may be the forebears to incarceration and recidivism. Studying the following four categories of pre-incarceration life experiences: the influence of drugs, socio-economic experiences, family experiences, and educational experiences aligns with prevailing literature (Bidwell, 2013; RAND, 2013; Velazquez, 2013), which suggests that pre-incarceration life events that contribute to incarceration and recidivism are parental substance use or abuse, socio-economic realities, educational deprivation, generational suppression, and family structure. There is no single repository of generalizable knowledge in the extensive literature review for this study indicating that a more holistic model for understanding the recidivism phenomenon of young adult incarcerated males is proffered.

The following research question guided this narrative study:

- What are the perceptions, lived experiences, and beliefs of the three incarcerated, young adult, African American males in a maximum-security prison?

A complementary question to the primary question was:

- How did the three incarcerated, young adult, African American males understand what caused them to recidivate?

Research Design

Creswell (2013) described a narrative study as collecting stories from individuals that create biographies, tell of individual experiences, and are chronicled into accounts by the researcher to convey a particular point or message. There are several types of narrative studies; biographical study, auto-ethnography, life history, and oral history. This study was an oral history in which I gathered personal reflections from the participants. A major theme of this study was to develop a relationship with each participant through which both the researcher and the participant discovered ways to learn and change. I conducted three one-on-one, one hour or less interviews with each participant. The first interview session was used to complete a demographic survey. Additionally, the first interview session was guided by scripted questions that focused on four major areas: prenatal experiences, family, education, and socioeconomics. The second interview session was a semi-scripted session with questions based on responses from session one that needed clarification. The second session was an opportunity for the participant to review transcripts from session one for accuracy. The third session was unscripted with the intent of reviewing sessions one and two responses and asking follow-up questions.

Setting

The setting for this study was a single gender, all male, maximum security, adult correctional facility, located in the northeast United States used to detain individuals from 18 years of age and older. The correctional facility detains up to 2,600 young adult and adult male inmates. The facility is also a death row facility. There are no juvenile offenders confined at the facility. The youngest offender detained at the facility is 18 years of age.

The inmate population consists of pretrial detainees, adjudicated inmates, disciplinary cases, inmates sentenced to life in prison, and death row inmates. Inmates in the institution include those who have violated conditions of parole, those who have committed burglary, those who are guilty of weapons offences, those who have raped infant children, those who have brutalized the disabled, those who have scammed seniors, those who have murdered other human beings, and those who have executed correctional officers. They are all here, every kind of human being; fathers and sons, uncles and nephews, brothers and siblings. The inmates in the institution represent the panorama of cultures and religions that are part of the greater North American society. The population of this repository of society's forgotten mirrors the same types of individuals found outside its unforgiving walls; there are clergy and church goers; there are pediatricians and their victims; there are lawyers and their clients; there are drug dealers and their disciples; they are all there. Within the walls of this institution are both scholars and the intellectually impaired; the physically profound and the genetically weak; the mentally strong and the mentally challenged; the morally informed and the morally deprived. All exist within those un-healing walls, merely surviving, waiting their turn to enter the turnstile's exit ramp; only to be thrust back into the same environments from which they came, from which they survived, and from which they learned.

The site provides many services to the inmate population including but not limited to religious services; educational services including GED®, high school diploma, and vocational training; intervention programs including parenting, anger management, gamblers anonymous, substance abuse intervention, and therapy for sex offenders. Adjudicated inmates can hold jobs within the institution for which they are monetarily compensated. There are medical, dental, and psychiatric professionals available to the inmates. There is a fully staffed, round-the-clock infirmary on site. Inmates have access to a law library with a paralegal on site. There are pre-

release programs available to inmates designed to assist them with the transition back into their communities.

This narrative study of incarcerated young adult, African American males explored the premise that there is a demographic disparity of the correctional institution's population compared to both the demographic of the general population of the region and of the United States. I present data that depicts the demographics of the correctional institution as well as the demographics of the region and the nation. However, in the interest of preserving the safety and identity of participants, and individuals in general, and to be compliant with the regulations promulgated in the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulation, 45 CFR 46 (the Common Rule) I have omitted the name of the state wherein the correctional facility is located. As mentioned previously, the primary research for this narrative study was one-on-one interviews with three selected inmate volunteer participants. I began my interviews only after successful approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Department of Corrections (DOC). To avoid any conflict of interest I scheduled all research and interviewing outside of my normal work day and within the guidelines set forth by the Warden and or the Warden's designated representative in compliance with the parameters set forth by the IRB and the DOCRB.

Participants

This narrative study included three inmates; none of whom are, were, or will be students of the teacher researcher, to protect both the inmate(s) and the researcher from any perception of favoritism and to preclude the possibility of influence from the teacher researcher or retaliation from a volunteer inmate participant. The selection process complied with Part 46.303 of Subpart C (Protection of Human Subjects 2009) as cited by Kiefer and Veit (2017) in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative which defines prisoners as: "any individual involuntarily

confined or detained in a penal institution." (p. 2) the research also received approval from the Department of Correction Research Bureau (DOCRB). "The term is intended to encompass individuals sentenced to such an institution under criminal or civil statute . . ." (p. 2). 45 CFR 46.306 (Protection of Human Subjects 2009) states that there are four categories of research which prisoners can be involved in. The participants (prisoners) involved in this study will be involved in the first category that studies "the possible causes, effects, and processes of incarceration, and of criminal behavior, provided that the study presents no more than minimal risk and no more than inconvenience to subjects." (p. 2). One of the conditions for participation in this study was the amount of time a potential participant was detained at the specific correctional site. Potential participants needed to be on site until December 2017, to complete all data collection.

The three inmate participants participated of their own free choice. Participants were recidivists and had multiple encounters with the criminal justice system. Participants were given written information and consent forms that clearly explained the purpose of the study. Participants were given several documents prior to taking part in this study: a statement of intent to keep their identity safe, secure, and anonymous, a statement assigning a pseudonym to the participant, a statement noting the risks of participation in the study, a statement which explained the complete and un-coerced nature of participation in the study, a statement which noted the rights of the participants to withdraw from the study at any time for any or no reason without fear of negative consequences, and a consent form to accept the invitation to participate in the study. Further, individual consent forms for each interview session were given at the time of each interview, participants were given a withdrawal form which would advise the researcher of the participant's intent to withdraw voluntarily from the study and were provided a statement advising the participant that there will be no payment for participation in the study nor will there

50

be any form of remuneration or personal gain by any participant in the study. All forms and documents were legibly signed and dated by each participant as a condition of participation. If a potential participant was unable to sign the forms and documents, a third party witness was asked to witness that the individual was read and understood the content of the forms and documents. Potential inmate participants were given enough time to make an informed decision whether to participate in the study. There was neither pressure to participate nor punishment for either declining to participate in the study or for dropping out of the study at any time during the study. Consent forms were site specific, were written at a level understandable to the prospective participant and ensured the confidentiality of the participant, the participant's information, and site-specific information.

To further ensure the unbiased screening of potential candidates, I did not participate directly in the screening process. Additionally, the interview process took place in a correctional institution within the state but other than the one at which I am a teacher. The latter condition was to comply with the recommendation of the DOCRB to further ensure the unbiased selection process and the confidentiality of the participants. Each participant was known to me only by a pseudonym: Mr. A, Mr. B, or Mr. C.

Data Collection

The purpose of this narrative study was to elucidate the pre-incarceration life experiences of three incarcerated, young adult, African American males. I limited data collection to four categories. First, demographic data was gathered to show the incarceration percentages of the participants' population and to compare that data to the general population. Second, the study attempted to discover and represent the function of education among the study group. Third, the study gathered data about the family structures of participants. Finally, this narrative study presented only data collected through interviews about the socio-economics of the participants'

families. Data was gathered during the interviews, extracted from interview notes, and was

codified in a data format. Each participant was asked to verify the teacher researcher's

interpretation of his data set to ensure it correctly represented the participant's intent.

Analysis

Three methods of analysis were used to validate the credibility of the findings of this

narrative study: member checking; rich, thick description; and comparison of participant data

versus the region's general population. Creswell (2013) describes member checking as the

researcher soliciting participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations (as

cited in Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and

Allen, 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles &

Huberman, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that "this technique is considered to be

the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 314). The

second method of analysis was that of rich, thick description. Creswell (2013) described rich,

thick description as "allowing readers to make decisions regarding transferability (Erlandson et

al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988) because the writer describes in detail the

participants or setting under study" (p. 252). Creswell suggested that thick description means that

the researcher provides details when describing a case or when writing about a theme. He

continues, citing Stake (2010), "A description is rich if it provides abundant, interconnected

details . . ." (p. 49). Finally, data collected through the interview process was compared to both

the regional data and the national data to determine if there are similar statistical events among

all three domains.

The data gathered from this narrative study was assigned to one of the four domains of

the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism: prenatal experience, family experience, educational

experience, or socioeconomic experience. While only a small sample, the results of the

categorization present a demographic unique to the correctional institution and the young adult age group that was studied. Furthermore, continued studies that build on the results of this study will be the basis for reengineering intervention programs more closely aligned to the needs of this age group resulting in more favorable outcomes.

Participant Rights

The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative explained that prisoners are a vulnerable population (2017). In 1978, the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "issued additional safeguards for prisoners as research subjects: Subpart C: Additional Protections Pertaining to Biomedical and Behavioral Research Involving Prisoners as Subjects." Kiefer and Veit (2017) stated:

> These regulations address the fact that prisoners are under constraints that could affect their ability to make truly voluntary and uncoerced decisions to participate in research. The only research that may be conducted with prisoners as subjects is research that is material to the lives of the prisoners. (p. 1)

All safeguards, consent issues, confidentiality requirements, risk factors, and other and all requirements assuring the safety, security, and anonymity of prisoner participants of this study were strictly adhered to.

Participants were able drop out of the study at any time, for any reason, without fear of discipline, retribution, or negative consequence. The identity of participants was held in the strictest confidence as only the warden of the correctional institution, the treatment administrator, his designated representatives and the security superintendent knew which inmates participated in this study. The names of participants are secured off site, in a locked compartment or bank safety deposit box. Participants were issued a pseudonym which is the identification with which they were addressed by the researcher by the prison's legal department, and this name is used

throughout the study. The pseudonym was retained by the researcher in a secure locked compartment off site. Should there be any form of contact, either visible or physical, outside the context of the study, it will be the obligation of the teacher researcher to not acknowledge any of the participants in any way.

Potential Limitations of the Study

Correctional institution populations are microcosms of the general population of young adults and adults, limited to single gender, male inhabitants. Individuals from all social strata reside in both the general population and in prison. Men of all educational levels exist in prison and in the general population. There is a diversity of religious beliefs in both domains. There are heterosexual, transgender, bisexual, and homosexual males in prison and in the general population. The one constant among these categories of human beings is the inherent dignity infused in their being by the Creator; a dignity that is not only an inseparable part of their being but also a charism that demands respect. That inherent dignity must never be compromised.

The role of the prison teacher is to encourage and support learning in every student or student inmate, and to enable the individual to transform his life by acquiring the skills necessary to return to society as a productive, law abiding citizen and family member. This narrative study highlighted the pre-incarceration life experiences of three incarcerated young adult African American males to provide foundational knowledge and characteristics for the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism. This study and its results are the first step to facilitate change in the operational understanding of recidivism. Redefining the parameters of recidivism can be an impetus for earlier pre-incarceration intervention. Assimilating the human experience into deeper understanding of young adult recidivism may act as a catalyst to responsibly reduce the recidivism rate of incarcerated, young adult, African American males. Finally, it can be the framework for continuous improvement in the quality of life for young adult, African American

males. There is no timetable for measuring success, but every percent reduction in the recidivism rate among this population will be a success.

My personal bias as a teacher researcher is the product of my servant leader underpinnings. I am an ordained deacon in the Roman Catholic Church. My spiritual charism of *diakonia,* servanthood, while indelible is an inseparable characteristic of who I am. The desire to support the needs of the participant population can lead to sympathy rather than empathy. Sympathy will lead to a biased subjectivity. This study sought ways to discover and record objective truth.

Conclusion

There is an emerging and growing awareness of young adults, individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, and their involvement with the criminal justice system. This narrative study sought to elucidate the pre-incarceration life experiences of three young adult, African American males to create a Holistic Understanding of Recidivism. Furthermore, because of the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism, intervention programs including education, behavior modification, and substance use therapy will be revised to better meet the needs of the young adult offender and to create more favorable post release outcomes for this unique age group. Chapter Three detailed the proposed methodology to guide this study. The methodology described effectively directed, focused, and supported the purpose of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS/OUTCOMES

The purpose of this narrative study was to elucidate the pre-incarceration life experiences of three incarcerated, young adult, African American males (ages 18 through 25), who have had multiple encounters with the criminal justice system, to further drive and explore a Holistic Understanding of Recidivism. The following research question guided this narrative study:

RQ 1: What are the perceptions, lived experiences, and beliefs of incarcerated, young adult, African American males in the maximum-security prison where they were detained?

A complementary question to the primary question was:

RQ 2: How do incarcerated young adult, African American males understand and describe what caused them to recidivate?

I conducted interviews on the afternoons of three consecutive Mondays in October 2017; October 9, October 16, and October 23. Interviews were scheduled in one-hour increments beginning at 12:30 pm and ending at 3:30 pm. Three participants volunteered for this study, and were assigned the pseudonyms "Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C" by the prison legal department. Each participant was scheduled for three (3) one-hour interviews. Mr. A was interviewed on three occasions, Monday, October 9, 2017; Monday, October 16, 2017; and Monday, October 23, 2017. Mr. B was interviewed on two occasions, Monday, October 9, 2017, and Monday, October 16, 2017. Mr. B declined to be interviewed on Monday, October 23, 2017. Mr. C was interviewed on two occasions; Monday, October 16, 2017 when both the Demographic Data Form and the Scripted Questions were completed; and on Monday, October 23, 2017.

The interviews took place at one of the largest maximum-security prisons in the northeastern United States, which houses up to 2,300 inmates. The prison detains young adult

males ages 18 through 25 and adult males over the age of 25. The identities of the three inmate participants were protected first by the principal investigator recusing himself from the selection process and also through the Department of Correction Research Bureau (DOCRB), which maintained compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Both the DOCRB and the IRB were managed by the institution's Treatment Administrator. The treatment administrator, through the prison's Legal Department, supervised the implementation of Additional Protections Pertaining to Biomedical and Behavioral Research Involving Prisoners Department to insure the anonymity of the participants to the principal investigator. The pseudonyms were assigned as Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C. The correctional facility where the interviews took place was not the same correctional institution where the primary investigator teaches.

Analysis Method

The method of analysis for this study began by establishing four nodes, or major areas of study. The four nodes established for this study were prenatal experiences, family experiences, educational experiences, and socioeconomic experiences. The NVivo® word frequency search resulted in a list of the 10 most frequently used words in the interviews. A review of the top 10 most frequently used words in the interviews enabled a thematic pattern to evolve.

The narratives of the three participants were retold through the lens of the four nodes. The themes, which developed from the individual narratives were supported through the comingling of two complementary theories, the Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory (CRT). The findings of the study were further examined through the framework of Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs.

Understanding a Narrative

This narrative study of three incarcerated young adult African American males was the sum of three lived experiences. Each of their three lived experiences created unique images. Those images are their reality. Each reality is a unique story. This study sought to capture the lived reality and experience of each of the three participants through the retelling of their story. While it has not been possible to experience the realities created by these images, it is possible to gain understanding and empathy for these men, and insight into their lives; their needs, dreams, regrets, and aspirations.

I designed this study using both the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory as a means of guiding the inquiry and capturing the essence of the participants lived experience. The Social Constructivist Theory originated as an attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality. In broad terms, it suggests that reality is relative, dependent on the person experiencing that reality. Critical Race Theory (CRT) evolved from the legal field in the 1960s and has since found its way into other fields such as education. CRT refers to a [theoretical] framework and represents a community of scholars committed to fighting racial injustices, whether they emerge in legal, educational, social, or political arenas (Anfara & Mertz, 2015, pp. 73–74). CRT supposes that racism is a reality of the American culture. It seeks to root out racial injustice. Delgado & Stefancic (2017) explained that CRT "tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it, setting out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies but to transform it for the better" (p. 8). Using the Critical Race Theory as part of the theoretical framework for this narrative study drives the research through the eyes of the storytellers, the participants.

There are three basic tenets of CRT. Delgado & Stefancic (2017) explained the first tenet commenting "racism is ordinary, not aberrational, the usual way society does business, the

common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (p. 8). This ordinariness makes racism difficult to address because it [racism] is not acknowledged. The second feature of CRT, interest convergence or material determinism, builds upon the first tenet. Delgado & Stefancic (2017) describe interest convergence as advancing the interests of both the "white elites and working-class whites resulting in little incentive to eradicate racism" (p. 9). Finally, Delgado & Stefancic propose that the:

> social construction thesis holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations . . . not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather they are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient. (p. 9)

The authors concluded by stating, "That society frequently chooses to ignore these scientific truths, creates races, and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics is of great interest to critical race theory" (p. 9). Races are created, and racism is learned, therefore, races can be retracted and racism can be invalidated.

The goal of this study was to encourage further exploration and research into the merits of a Holistic Understanding of Recidivism. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism acknowledges the technical definition of recidivism found in *Webster's New World Basic Dictionary of American English* (1998) as "a tendency to relapse into a previous condition; relapse into criminal behavior" (p. 726). It explored pre-natal, family, education, and socioeconomic experiences as significant factors that contributed to the recidivism phenomenon. Current literature suggested that "the correctional justice system is moving in the direction of acknowledging and providing interventions for another age group, the young adult, individuals from 18 to 25 years of age" (Goldstein, 2016, p. 1). The Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSGJC, 2015) supports the theory that the young adult age group has unique

characteristics and identifiable behavior patterns that warrant continued research to further explain this population and to develop appropriate intervention.

The Interviews

Monday October 9, 2017 was a misty, grey day; a day that lacked the welcoming warmth of blue skies and bright sunshine. It was and remains one of those memorable times seared into my memory. It was a day like no other, a day when I would drive the stake of credibility, commitment, and change into the arena of social justice. It was a day when I would enter the unwelcoming and unforgiving chambers of a maximum-security correctional center as a graduate student researcher, deacon, and teacher. I left that unchanged, unaffected, and unforgiving holding tank of human failures and forgotten lives a different person. Monday October 9, 2017 was the day I had worked toward with my entire being for the previous three years. It was a day filled with excitement yet muted by the possibility of rejection. It was a day that was awe inspiring because what seemed so distant and so formidable three years ago had become the present reality filled with hope and promise and challenge. It was the first day of interviews with three incarcerated, young adult, African American males: Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C. They would tell their stories to me so I could retell their stories to any audience who may listen.

These stories are retold so that the general population may understand the lives of a population we are collectively quick to marginalize, if we think about them at all; they are the lives often given little thought regarding their promise or value yet important lives nonetheless. Recognizing the innate humanness of the three incarcerated, African American males objectifies lives very different from the reader's but human lives no less. These lives were born in innocence as all lives are, but have lived in the hallways of oppression, rejection, and despair. These are three young adult, African American lives lived trapped in a vacuum wherein their reality accepted failure and defeat as the benchmark of accomplishment. These lives are the same

lives that, depending on the crime they were found guilty of, were stripped of the basic right of citizenship including the right to vote and self-defense, both while incarcerated, and if and when they are released back into society. Justice John Harlan, in his dissent to Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) wrote:

> . . . in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. . . In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful (p. 1).

The disproportionate representation of people of color in correctional institutions belies that lofty benchmark.

The Participants

Each participant had to identify as African American, had to be between the ages of 18 and 25, and had to have had more than one encounter with the correctional justice system. Finally, the participants and the primary investigator could not have had any prior or current affiliation. Table 1 is a demographic table that shows common attributes of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Metric	Mr. A	Mr. B	Mr. C
Married	no	no	no
I am one of ____ children	6	11	4
I am the ___ of ___ children	5th of 6	3rd of 11	4th of 6
I completed ___ grade	8th	9th	9th
I attended school through ___ grade	9th	9th	9th
My favorite subject was	Math	Math	Math
My least favorite subject was	Social Studies	Science	Science
My family's annual income was	$50,000	$55,000	not sure
I grew up in a two parent home	yes	yes	no
I was not raised by my biological parents	false	false	false
My parents owned their own home	yes	no	no
My mother completed ___ grade	12th	12th	12th

My father completed ___ grade	12th	12th	12th
There was substance use in my mother's family	no	no	no
There was substance use in my father's family	No	yes	yes
I was ___ years old when I was first incarcerated	11	16	17
I was incarcerated for ___	stealing/ robbery/ drugs	robbery/ drugs	robbery/gun
I have been incarcerated how many times	20	6	3

The Narratives: Mr. A

The first interviewee, Mr. A, was a twenty-year-old African American male who was born and raised in a two-parent family. He was the fifth of six children and noted that he was primarily raised by his four older brothers. Both of Mr. A's parents completed 12th grade. He was first incarcerated at age 11, the first child in his family to be imprisoned. Mr. A was a special education student and struggled with learning, yet he was polite, attentive, and engaged during our interview sessions.

Family

While Mr. A had a mother, father and siblings growing up, his parents both worked outside the home, and he reported that they were not present in his life, to the point he noted "I grew up where my older brothers who were supposed to be raising me, but they was doing their own thing [selling drugs], because my mother and father weren't around, I mean they were working." Mr. A's father was incarcerated for three years on drug charges when Mr. A was 12 years old. As a result, he did not separate the role of his older brothers as different from the role traditionally associated with parents, and his brothers were given role model status. However, his brothers were also drug dealers, so Mr. A grew up idolizing not only his brothers, but the life of drug peddling that they lived. As an impressionable child, Mr. A remembers his brothers using him to consummate drug deals because,

Money was always tight. My brothers who participated in more activities [drug dealing] had more money. Now my dad worked at the hospital as a janitor and my mom was a cook there. I guess that wasn't enough money to take care of me.

At 11 years old Mr. A realized that money was scarce. He knew that mom and dad did not have enough money for him but that three of his four older brothers always had money. He began to skip school in fourth grade. He was also suspended for bad behavior.

Education

Education was an inconsistent and troubling part of Mr. A's formative years. He completed 8th grade in regular school. Mr. A confessed that he misbehaved in school "to get attention, the attention I wasn't getting at home." He shared with me, "I like school, but school was not good to me." From third grade on Mr. A was schooled in an alternative setting; he was taught either in the state's juvenile correctional education system, in alternative learning environments, or homebound schooled by the school district. Today, he is enrolled in the prison's Adult Basic Education (ABE) program and is currently working toward earning a GED®. Mr. A reflected on his early education:

Having different teachers from other schools come to sit with me and help me through my class [because I was struggling to understand the material helped me.] I was homebound for a few years. [My educational experience was not consistent.] At 14 to 17 [I] had to do homebound learning then I went back to regular school but got kicked out.

Homebound school meant that Mr. A would walk to a teacher's home after normal school hours to receive one or two hours of instruction. Sometimes the teacher would be at home and sometimes not. Homebound school was not in addition to the regular school day, it was in place of the regular school day. From the hours of 7 AM until 3:30 PM, Mr. A was idle, alone, and up for mischief. Mr. A often filled those idle hours with stealing, breaking into homes, and other

crimes. His mother and father were both out of the house by 6 AM, before he was supposed to leave for school at 7 AM. His mother arrived home after Mr. A's arrival time from school, so she would not know if Mr. A attended school that day. Dad went to his second job after work; selling drugs.

There was a pattern of dysfunction throughout and within Mr. A's educational experience. He was a child with behavior issues. He was a child from a family of low income. He was a child from a home whose mom and dad worked long hours with low pay; parents who were away from the home each day for up to 12 hours. Mr. A's lived reality was that his teachers, all teachers of no color, really did not care for him nor have enough time for him:

> . . . sometimes I would be having trouble with my reading and I would be like I can't read that [the assignment] so that I can ask questions. I stopped asking questions because I thought he was downing me [making fun of me] in front of the other kids.

Mr. A concluded this part of our interview by recalling "He didn't have time for me, he was helping all the other kids." This expression of hopelessness, of frustration, of lack of belief in the system is no more than a statement of the existence of racism, even as subliminal as it may appear.

There was a different kind of normal in Mr. A's life; income from drug deals was often used to support the insufficient wages of two fulltime workers. Mr. A explained that he lived in a hand-me-down world, an uncertain world that did not always include adequate food. When asked if he always had food to eat, and clothing, he simply stated "not always."

As a child, he had no way of knowing the drug involvement of his father was not legal or acceptable. To Mr. A, his father was like any other – and his first memory of his father was "walking along the beach throwing rocks into the water." Soon, that memory was overshadowed by the enticing power of his older brothers "who were raising me because my mother and father

weren't around, they were working." Mr. A, when asked what he did for recreation replied

candidly, "Got into trouble." His lived experiences, his reality, allowed him to steal bikes, and

break into homes, and deal drugs, not so much as something with moral implications but as

activities to fill idle time with excitement and to acquire the money he would not otherwise have.

Mr. A spoke about his daily attendance at school. He admitted that he did not attend

school every day. A pattern of truancy began when "I was like 10, 11 years old…I knew the

times my parents left for work and when Mom got home, so as long as I was home before she

got home from work I was ok." Mr. A confessed that when he "cut school I would steal bikes,

break into cars and homes." Mr. A was an unsupervised, parent-deprived young child. The

environment he lived in enabled the antisocial behavior he exhibited. The segue to his encounter

with the criminal justice system was his antisocial behavior.

At age 17, during the first month of his freshman year in high school, Mr. A was

incarcerated once again for robbery. In his words, "I really didn't go to high school, only went

for about a month." However, he did note that he was assigned an Individual Education Plan

(IEP) to create a more level learning environment to compensate for his impaired learning,

though he noted it did not help much. He reported that his best subject was mathematics and that

social studies was his least favorite subject and that he struggled with his teachers. He recalled

his favorite teacher, who made a lasting impression on him:

> The best teacher I had, she understood me, and she sat there, and when I needed to ask a
>
> question she broke it down. The worst teacher I had just didn't care about me getting my
>
> education. I mean sometimes I would be having trouble with my lessons in reading.
>
> When I started asking questions they [the teachers] wouldn't break it down for me, and I
>
> would be like 'I can't [understand], I want you to read it to me' so I can ask them
>
> [questions] and [I hoped they would?] take the time [to answer me]; things like the

question is "how many of slices of the pizza were left?" or other simple math issues.

Finally, I stopped asking because I thought [that my teachers] was just downing me in

front of the other kids.

While he sought attention at school from his teachers, whom he interpreted as being too busy

with other students to devote their entire time to him, Mr. A noted that he barely received

attention from his mother or father. As a result, he noted that he sought attention in many wrong

places and that aided and abetted his life turning to crime and imprisonment.

Mr. A struggles even today with the Adult Basic Education courses he is currently

enrolled in, as he works toward achieving his GED®:

Yeah, like now I am in a class [ABE class] and it's like some of the stuff I just don't

grasp. I took a [TABE test, Test of Adult Basic Education] like [and] I have [one]

tomorrow, Wednesday, and Friday. You test [TABE test] like three times [every 60

hours of class time], like the 4th time they, and if you don't get it [make an educational

functioning level gain] they like kick you out [unenroll you] and you got to enroll again

[after 90 hours of no educational services] and come back.

Mr. A continues to struggle with his learning deficits. He is uncertain why he cannot receive the

individualized educational services provided to him prior to his twenty-first birthday, the legal

age when IEP's are no longer a part of one's educational experience.

Socio-economics

As early as 10 years of age Mr. A recalled he did not understand the family's finances but

was aware that money was scarce. He remembers wearing second-hand clothes most of the time,

"I wore mostly second-hand clothes but sometimes I did get new clothes." He never asked his

parents for money and when he needed money he went to his older brothers. Mr. A recalled that

there was tension at times about money, and there was not always enough to provide food or

other necessities. He explained it this way:

> My brothers, who participated in more activities had more money . . . My dad and mom
>
> worked at the hospital; they would leave for work by 6 AM and not return until 5 PM. I
>
> guess that wasn't enough money to take care of me. My brothers were involved in
>
> activities [drugs].

Mr. A did not know exactly how much money his parents earned. He did know that if he needed

money, his parents did not make enough to take care of him; he would go to his older brothers.

Mr. A, usually vibrant and very willing to share with me became subdued, almost introverted, as

we talked about where he lived, "the environment, the hood [neighborhood; connoting a bad

neighborhood] where there was drugs and crime and people getting robbed and killed. It

affected how I grew up. It was the environment!" The environment was a crucial part of Mr. A's

lived and formative experiences.

Influence of Drugs

The drug dealing business in his home was not isolated to his father—his brothers were

also drug dealers. Mr. A recalled his four older brothers very clearly. He confided that three of

his four older brothers had been locked up. One was incarcerated for 18 months for selling and

using drugs. A second was incarcerated for three years for drugs. A third was incarcerated for

three years for doing drugs. Mr. A was between the ages of 13 and 18 during this time.

Regardless of the illegal nature of their profession, his brothers were his role models, the people

he looked up to, and the lives he would emulate. His brothers were the father figure that was not

present in his life.

Mr. A's father was arrested and incarcerated for selling drugs when Mr. A was 12 years

old, the same year Mr. A did his first drug deal. He remembered that after his father's

incarceration money was scarce. His older brothers gave him the money to deal drugs, so he met

with the dealer(s), paid for and received the drugs, gave his older brothers the drugs, and he

received money for dealing. Mr. A recounted, "I bought them from drug dealers. I got money

from my brothers." His brothers knew I [Mr. A] was buying drugs.

The Narratives: Mr. B

Mr. B was a 22-year old incarcerated, African American male. I met with Mr. B on two

occasions; Monday, October 9, 2017 and Monday, October 16, 2017. Mr. B was not available

for a third meeting because of a conflicting engagement. Mr. B was extremely polite,

appreciative of being part of my research project, and receptive to and appreciative of the

interview process.

Mr. B was born and raised in a two-parent family. He was the third of 11 children.

Growing up Mr. B shared the responsibility of raising his younger siblings. Both of Mr. B's

parents worked outside the home as flaggers, directing traffic at road construction sites. Mr. B's

father sold drugs to supplement the family's income. The father's involvement in drugs was an

accepted norm in Mr. B's family. Mr. B completed 10th grade and was first incarcerated

sometime during 11th grade. He completed his education by earning a GED® while incarcerated

at one of the state's juvenile detention centers. He noted that "life was good," until his father

was arrested on drugs charges and was sentenced to prison. His father's incarceration changed

Mr. B's life forever "That's when everything changed, when we moved back to Kant, [I] started

getting in trouble and that's how I ended up getting incarcerated." The environment of Kant

fueled Mr. B's behavior.

Family

Mr. B's family was large, 13 people. Both parents worked outside the home and both

parents completed 12th grade. Mr. B described family life as:

. . . pretty cool, actually. I like having a lot of brothers and sisters. I mean we always did stuff, we was never bored. We always had something to do. My parents were good, they disciplined us when we needed it, like getting bad grades in school, stuff like that. I mean it was OK but my parents would sometimes go out so me and my brothers would have to take care of the younger ones; that would be a handful sometimes.

Mr. B's family was originally from Kant. They moved to Welton prior to his entering First Grade. Life was good while the family lived in Welton. Mr. B recalled, "I would have to say moving from Kant to Welton . . . really changed everything. I was growing up with my family members. I was with my cousins and my family." Family was very important to Mr. B.

The family moved back to Kant during Mr. B's freshman year in high school. The extended family was gone; Welton was a long distance from Kant, the family authority figure was incarcerated. The family lived in Capitol Park, a low-income neighborhood in Kant. Mr. B remembered Capitol Park as a neighborhood:

> filled with drugs, people was fightin' about all kinds of stuff, there was drugs in the high school. And where I stayed it was one way in and one way out; it was kinda hectic. Capitol was terrible, killing, crack jars all over the ground; it was terrible where I was staying at.

The move to Kant from Welton resulted from the father's incarceration because of drug dealing. Mr. B reminisced about life without his father remembering that the family patriarch and disciplinarian was gone and chaos took hold, "That's when everything changed, when we moved back to Kant. [I] started getting into trouble and that's how I ended up getting incarcerated." The children became unruly, disrespectful, and oblivious to authority; mom was completely ignored. Mr. B reminisced about the family without the father:

Yeah, he made sure we stayed out of trouble, made sure we got good grades in school. We took care of our brothers and sisters . . . I was doing alright, but family, like my Dad, just got locked up. I mean we was just goin' [crazy], doing whatever we wanted, so yeah, we wasn't listening to my Mom, I was just doin' whatever I wanted.

Life had changed dramatically for Mr. B and his 10 siblings. The father who motivated them to get good grades in school was gone. The authority figure and the family disciplinarian was in jail. Mom was on her own to raise 11 children, to try to feed, clothe, and nurture them, to provide a roof over their heads. The new environment to which they moved was laden with drugs, killings, and guns.

Education

Mr. B's mother and father both completed 12th grade, and he was an average student. His favorite subject was Mathematics and his least favorite subject was Science. Mr. B had a normal educational trajectory until he committed his first crime in 11th grade. He completed 11th grade during his pre-trial incarceration at one of the state's juvenile detention centers. Mr. B earned a GED® in 2012 while incarcerated at one of the state's post-adjudication juvenile detention facilities. Mr. B had no special education supports during his learning experience. Mr. B's parents monitored academics very closely. Once Mr. B's dad was incarcerated things changed dramatically. Mr. B talked about his educational experience after his father was incarcerated, recalling:

Once we moved back to Kant, I maintained a C average through 9th grade. I started missing school; going to bed at 1, 2, or 3 in the morning. Mom was out of the house by 6 AM, so I would stay in the crib [house], I wouldn't get up. School would call about 4:30 in the afternoon and leave a voice message. We would delete it [the phone message] before Mom got home so she never knew we were skipping [school].

Mr. B was overwhelmed by the drug-infested, chaotic environment of Kant. He missed the authority and discipline afforded him through his father. He released his frustrations through antisocial behaviors.

During our last visit, Mr. B talked a great deal about his struggle with his education. He confided:

High school was rough; I was hangin' around with the wrong crowd. I began to skip school. It was tough. I was 17. There was no authority figure to keep me on track. My Social Studies teacher worked with me, she understood me, and she gave me extra credit work. She made sure I got it done. Finally, I just wanted to get out and just get my GED®. Serrif School [the state post adjudication juvenile correctional institution] was very disciplined and very organized. Serrif was good for me. I got my GED® during my incarceration at Serrif.

Socio-economics

Mr. B's parents owned their own home. When the family moved from Welton to Kant they resided in Capitol Park, a low-income housing project in Kant. Mr. B stated that his family's income ranged between $55,000.00 and $60,000.00 annually. The family was considered middle class. Two incomes were not adequate to support the needs of the family of 13. Mr. B's father supplemented the two-income family by selling drugs. The father's drug involvement was not a secret among the children; Mr. B reminisced, "My dad always sold drugs. We didn't want for nothing; honestly we didn't need anything. My dad used to tell us, 'This is what I do.'" Once Mr. A's father was incarcerated the family lost their home, moved into government subsidized housing, and began receiving government assistance.

The Influence of Drugs

The influence of drugs was part of Mr. B's entire life; his father sold drugs to make ends meet, to ensure his family's survival. Drugs were a subliminal norm in Mr. B's life experience; they were an every-day part of life. The father was upfront about his connection to drugs. It was the father's drug connection that Mr. B blamed for his personal demise. Mr. B described his family's return to his early childhood environment and his father's incarceration in the following words:

> He was dealing drugs, he got caught; he did, I think, 3½ years. I was 14 and 17. That's when everything changed; that's when we moved back to Kant and, [I] started getting in trouble and that's how I ended up getting incarcerated.

Mr. B noted that both peer pressure and wanting to keep up with friends played a significant role in his decision to commit crime. There was also a perceived need of money. Money in the household went to food, clothing, and paying rent, utilities, and other necessities. There was little money left for the children. Mr. B expressed his reality in the following way:

> My friends was telling me how they was getting money by breakin' into cribs [houses] and that it would be quick [breaking in and getting money] and you could get fast money and you could get rid of the stuff [money and or drugs] fast, I needed money at the time so I said, 'I'll do it.'

Once Mr. B's father was incarcerated the disciplinarian was no longer present in the family. Mr. B's Mom was alone with no adult support. The children ignored her, did not view her as an authority figure:

> We kids was good with each other but we wasn't listening to my mom; we knew she wouldn't do anything. I began to skip school. I was blowing my butt off smoking [marijuana] and going to my girl's house, just doing all sorts of stuff.

The family structure was falling apart. The father was incarcerated. The male role model was gone. The family disciplinarian was absent. The children began to display disruptive behavior and defiance toward their mom.

The police

Mr. B and I spent time talking about being a black African American male in the United States. During our conversation Mr. B stated:

> We're already labeled. Sometimes you fall into it [acting to get police attention]; they [the police] think I am already doing this and that [committing crime] so I might as well go ahead and do it [commit a crime]; but at first I try to do what is right.

Mr. B's reality was that the police were looking to find something that he and his friends were doing wrong, just because they were black. He commented that "Once you get labelled they [the police] constantly come at you [harassing you, singling you out]; it becomes easy to fall into the negativity trap." He continued:

> They [the police] see you driving in your car and they see you got your hat turned sideways or have a hoodie on and they will pull you over. You'll be on the street with your boys [friends] and it's a sunny day; they [the police] will pull over and mess with you [harass you] and ask "Where you all going, on the sidewalk and all that [why are you just standing around]?

Mr. B concluded our conversation about the police intolerance and racial discrimination with the following comment.

> As soon as they [the cops] see a couple of black people together and they [black people] are just chillin' [hanging around] outside, they [the police] already think something's wrong. It's like you can't really be outside; not unless you're doing something wrong.

Mr. B was very aware of the police presence in his life and the lives of his friends. He understood the police presence not so much as an inherent evil, rather as a presence that existed because he was black but was not necessary.

<center>**The Narratives: Mr. C**</center>

Mr. C was a twenty-two-year-old African American male. He was the fourth of six children and grew up in a single parent home with his mother and his biological sister. The other children of the family were from different biological mothers and they lived with their father, who is also Mr. C's biological father. Mr. C spent a lot of time at his grandmother's home and noted that he liked it there, and that she spoiled him. Mr. C's mother worked outside the home and was employed in a variety of jobs, though he remembers her time as a bus driver most vividly. His father was not part of his life. Mr. C shared that he began getting into trouble in school during ninth grade. He was not concerned that his behavior would hurt his mother. "I used to get beatings, I used to get in trouble, but I really didn't care; I care now but not back then." Even as a young child playing football Mr. C recalled that he quit "because I kept getting in trouble." He felt that there were rarely consequences for his rebellious behavior; and if there were, they were mediocre.

Family

Mr. C recalled growing up as a positive experience:

> I grew up on my mother's side of the family. I seen a lot of my brothers and sisters on my father's side of the family so I used to see them from time to time. I used to spend a lot of time with my mom and grand mom.

Mr. C was very distant when we talked about his dad. I felt that I was trespassing on a private space during our conversation, but he did share his earliest memory of his father, recalling, "I didn't think he was my Dad, I thought somebody else was my Dad." His father served 14 years

of a 20 year sentence and that he visited him "Like three or four times" [while he was in prison], adding to the fact that he never really knew or had a relationship with his father.

While Mr. C did not have a paternal role model in his life, during our conversation about role models Mr. C disclosed that he had been an accomplished young athlete:

I used to play football, quarterback, and I was very good. Once I got older, once I got to stay outside my focus [on sports] kinda changed. I looked up to my cousins [and] the people on the street; they had all the cars, girls, like that . . . like around 6th 7th grade I quit playing football, began run around fightin', sneaking out, staying out late, chasing girls.

Mr. C's choice of role models changed as his life interests changed.

During our second interview session on Monday October 16, 2017 Mr. C and I discussed his encounters with the criminal justice system. He confided that he had been incarcerated three times. His first incarceration was at age 15 for robbery and a gun charge; "I needed money." His second arrest was for a gun charge and a drug charge. His current incarceration resulted from a drug charge.

Education

Mr. C was an average student who began his educational experience in kindergarten. Mr. C attended school regularly until he was expelled in 9th grade. He got into fights; he skipped school to go to his girlfriend's house. He was expelled for missing time. He began stealing. He remembered, "I used to steal, used to have this girl, went over to my boy's house, smoking, go to my space." Recapping his thoughts of high school, Mr. C said:

Never really had one [a high school experience]. I was in 9th grade for 4 [or] 5 months before I got expelled. I got expelled twice, I went to one school, I got expelled and [was] asked to leave. I went to a second school cause I got into a fight. Just a lot of dumb

stuff. Ya know, back then everybody was kinda clicked up, ya know everybody was

fightin'.

During our second interview Mr. C and I spoke again about his education experience. I

wanted to understand what was happening in his life at the time. Mr. C said, "Got expelled,

kicked outta school. [I] Wasn't really dealing with my family like that. I kept getting in trouble

so they [Mr. C's family] wasn't dealin with me like that." Mr. C's indifference to the

consequences of his behavior at home overflowed into the classroom and eventually led to his

expulsion from school.

The Influence of Drugs

Seventh grade was a turning point for Mr. C. It was in seventh grade that he began using

marijuana. Mr. C said he stole his first joint from a cousin, "The first time I ever smoked I think

I was like 13. Seventh grade. I stole it, found it, one of my cousins had some, I bumped into it

and I took a little bit out." He also said he had sold prescription drugs illegally when he was 14

or 15 years old. "I used to buy it from older guys and then resell it."

Mr. C was arrested and incarcerated for robbery and drug charges in 9th grade. By the

time he was arrested he had already become his own dealer, he had his own business.

When asked if he has ever used prescription drugs illegally Mr. C confided "yes, in the last

couple years."   Mr. C admitted that he was using drugs regularly prior to his incarceration;

"nothing like cocaine, just marijuana."

Socio-economics

Mr. C had no idea what the family income was. Mr. C lived with his mother and his

younger sister in a single income household. Mr. C's mother held numerous jobs but not a

steady job. When I asked Mr. C if the family ever received any kind of assistance from the

government he stated, 'The family would receive financial support during the holidays 'to get

little stuff like toys.' Mr. C and his family lived the socioeconomic reality of generational economic oppression, low wages, and stifled workplace upward mobility.

Findings

This research was fully supported by the Department of Corrections (DOC). The DOC Research Bureau regulations require research findings be reported to the Bureau. The findings from the research may be used to determine common experiences, trends, or repetitive patterns of behavior. There are similarities and parallel events in all the participants' stories. First, there were substance users, abusers, or distributors in each of the biological families. Second, each participant was influenced either directly or indirectly by adults who lured them into the use and or distribution of drugs. Third, each participant lived a young life that either excluded one parent or included the deprivation of parental presence. Fourth, the participants' biological fathers were incarcerated for drug related crimes. Fifth, each of the three participants had troubled educational experiences in their early lives including disruptive behavior, truancy, criminal behavior during scheduled school days, substandard academic performance, and/or perceived ineffective, uncaring, and disinterested teachers.

The Influence of Drugs

The three participants in this study each had a linear relationship to someone in their immediate biological family who was associated with drugs either as a drug dealer or a drug consumer. Mr. A's father actively sold drugs. Three of Mr. A's older brothers were drug dealers. He was used by his older brothers to make drug deals. He was incarcerated for drug charges at age 12. Mr. B's father sold drugs to supplement the family's two incomes. The drug influence was not only a way of life, it was also an accepted norm. Mr. B's father had 13 mouths to feed, clothe, and provide a home for. Mr. C's father was not an active part of Mr. C's life but was incarcerated for drug dealing in Mr. C's early childhood for 14 years. Mr. C's uncle on his

mother's side of the family was a known drug user. Mr. C began using marijuana when he was 13 years old. By the time he was incarcerated for the first time, in 9th grade, Mr. C had already established his own drug business.

There is an underlying motivation in each of the families for the drug influence—survival. Each of the three participants indicated that they got involved with drugs because it was a quick way to obtain a lot of money quickly; and they all needed money. The paternal example each of the participants provided the motivation to engage in drug dealing to acquire those needs they determined were necessary for survival such as clothing, spending money, and food.

Family Involvement with Drugs

Each of the three participants in this study had direct family linkage to the influence of drugs, see Appendix E. Mr. A's father and mother both worked full time outside the home. Mr. A's father sold drugs after work to support the needs of the family's survival; food, clothing, and shelter. Mr. A had three older brothers who used Mr. A as a middle man for their drug deals. Each of Mr. A's three drug dealing brothers spent time in the criminal justice system for drug related crimes.

Mr. B's father was incarcerated for drug dealing. There were 13 people to feed, clothe, and shelter. Both Mr. B's parents worked outside the home but the two incomes were not enough to provide for the basic survival needs of the family. Mr. B's father sold drugs to compensate for the insufficient incomes.

Mr. C lived in a single parent, single income family. He lived with his mother and sister. His mother held numerous short-term jobs. Mr. C recalled that his mother worked as a school bus driver. The family received government assistance to supplement the mother's income. Mr. C's father was not an active presence in Mr. C's life. Mr. C's father spent 14 years in prison for drug related charges. An uncle on Mr. C's mother side of the family had a drug addiction.

Absent Parent(s)

Each of the three participants was influenced by one or more adults in one or more ways growing up. The NRCCFI (2016) reported that 1 in 28 children in the United States has an incarcerated parent, and that 1 in 9 African American children in the United States has an incarcerated parent. The absence of a parent in the family is a cause of trauma, shame, and stigma (NRCCFI, 2016, p. 1). Mr. A's father was both the main wage earner and the authority figure in the family. Mr. A recalled that "my mother and father weren't around, they were working." In addition, Mr. A's father spent three years in prison on drug charges. Mr. A had little if any paternal presence in his formative years.

Mr. B's father was not a highly visible parent, working a full-time job and selling drugs after work to supplement the two-income family. Mr. B's father was incarcerated for selling drugs when Mr. B was a freshman in high school. Mr. B recalled his father "was dealing drugs, he got caught, he did 3½ years. I was 14. That's when everything changed; I started getting in trouble."

Mr. C had no paternal presence throughout his life. He lived with his biological mother and sister. Mr. C's father spent 14 years in prison on drug charges. During the father's incarceration Mr. C remembers, "I didn't think he was my Dad, [I visited him] like three or four times [while he was in prison]." Mr. C's father was an unintended role model who had little presence in Mr. C's upbringing, Mr. C's father influenced Mr. C's dabbling in drug dealing.

Incarcerated Parents

The impact of an incarcerated parent on a child is traumatic. The NRCCFI (2016) reported that "Parental incarceration is now recognized as an 'adverse childhood experience' (ACE); it is distinguished from other adverse childhood experiences by the unique combination

of trauma, shame, and stigma" (p. 1). Each of the participants experienced the adverse childhood experience of having an incarcerated parent.

Each participant's father and or other family members were involved with drug dealing. Additionally, each of the participants became involved with the use or sale of drugs. Second, environment was considered a major reason for recidivism by each of the participants. Third, education was a factor involved in the undesired behavior that drove the participants to criminal activity and recidivism. Fourth, the behavior that resulted in the participants' incarceration was learned behavior rather than survival behavior. Fifth, the parents of the participants existed in the survival level of existence from which they were unable to move upward.

Troubled educational experiences

Fifth, education is an essential component of reducing recidivism and increasing the probability of successful employment upon return to community (Travis et al. 2015; Lockwood et al. 2012; and RAND Corporation, 2013). Only one of the participants received special education assistance in the form of IEP's. All the study's participants had not completed high school prior to their first incarceration. There was a presumption based on the four nodes of the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism that impaired learning capacity would be more prevalent among the participants. That was not the case. The reality was that each of the three participants' educational experience was dysfunctional.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that there are multiple levels of needs that humans experience to survive, grow, and thrive. The behavior of the participants was learned, aggressive behaviors. The pre-incarceration behaviors of the participants were justified by them within the context of Maslow's physiological level, the lowest survival level. Each needed

money; for clothes, for food, and for status.   Each participant lacked the family support, the decision-making skills, and the maturity to successfully navigate their dysfunctional pre-incarceration lives. Those factors do not mitigate personal accountability for their actions.

Several factors contributed to diminished quality educational experiences. First, parents left for work before the children woke and came home after school was over. The children learned that there was no accountability for not going to school. Second, idle time was filled with mischief, stealing, home invasions, and car break-ins. Third, the adolescent boys' ill-found freedom clashed with the legitimate authority at school and caused confrontation with other school students. There was only one teacher of color in each of the young men's educational experience. Finally, lower level crime escalated to felony level offences, and incarceration.

Socio-economic oppression

Finally, the parents of the three participants struggled economically. Each parent was employed outside the home. Each of the jobs was an unskilled job. The family incomes were insufficient to support the basic survival needs of their families. Each of the fathers of the three participants resorted to selling drugs in order to supplement the non-living wages they earned.

The substandard wages created undesired outcomes.   Substandard wages were exacerbated by the unwanted outcomes that resulted from selling drugs; incarceration, loss of wages, disruption of the family unit, and the trauma of an incarcerated parent. Upward mobility is stifled as a result of generational socio-economic oppression. The participants all noted that the environment in which they were raised and to which they were returned after their incarcerations were environments that cultivated, fostered, and perpetuated activities associated with the physiological level of the Hierarchy of Needs, including the need for food, shelter, and clothing. The physiological level of the Hierarchy of Needs is the basic level for survival within the Needs Hierarchy. Before advancing to a higher level, the needs of the physiological level

must be satisfied. The overarching factor linking each of the participants to drugs was the survival need as described in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Each participant expressed that returning to the same environment was the greatest challenge to making better decisions and breaking the prison connection. Mr. A expressed the common concern in the following words:

> I spent most of it [my life] locked up. I really can't say it's the system. I can say myself and my family moving back to the same environment [was the major reason for repeating the same behavior over and over.] It was going back to the same environment. You get caught up in the same things; that's all you know.

Returning to the same environment was a common theme among the participants as a pivotal reason they recidivated. There is a subtle but real connection between the need for reengineered substance use prevention and post-incarceration community placement. Continuing to indulge in the ineffective practices of the past that have produced recidivism rates as high as 75% at the five year post incarceration anniversary will remain ineffective and fiscally irresponsible.

Conclusion

This narrative study was undertaken to document and retell the lived experiences of three incarcerated, young adult, African American males who had multiple encounters with the criminal justice system, to establish a foundation for further study to determine the merits of a holistic understanding of young adult recidivism, and to recommend ongoing steps to further develop the holistic understanding of recidivism. On the surface, there is the appearance of three troubled incarcerated, young adult, African American males who were born into family situations that would provide them a pathway to failure. That appearance, that image, was true for them as it is true for so many children of color. Drugs played a crucial role in each of their lives. There was more than drugs, however. Paternal absence in each of the participant's lives

was their lived reality. Education was not a robust experience for them, rather, they believed they were burdens to their white teachers "who didn't have time for them." Being born into poverty, into two income families whose less than living wages insured their continued socioeconomic oppression was the lived reality of the three participants.

The influence of drugs in their lives began before they were born; each of their fathers actively engaged in dealing drugs. Each of their fathers was incarcerated for their drug dealing. The families were poor, very poor. Two of the three families were not able to provide adequate food, clothing, or shelter even with two full time incomes. The third family was supported by a single parent who worked numerous jobs and received government assistance to help feed, clothe, and shelter the family. There was a greater issue than drugs. There was the need to survive; to have enough money to feed 13 mouths; to have enough money to clothe the children; and to have enough money to provide adequate shelter. The reality for these African Americans living in generational pockets of poverty was that there would never be enough to make ends meet but that drugs would provide an immediate, if only a temporary, respite.

Chapter 4 told their stories; stories of systemic racism. Racism that was present in their educational experiences. Racism that was present in their neighborhood environments. Racism that was woven into their socioeconomic reality. Their family units were dysfunctional. The influence of drugs was an ever-present reality.

Chapter 5 will interpret the findings of chapter 4 and discuss the implications for individuals, communities, and organizations. In addition to interpreting the findings of chapter 4, chapter 5 will make recommendations for continuing the study of a holistic approach to recidivism; will make broad generalized recommendations for reengineering the educational experience; and will suggest reframed approaches for improving the prison to employment pipeline.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There is a developing awareness among scholars and criminal justice practitioners to recognize, authenticate, and study an emerging group of individuals who comprise the largest segment of the criminal justice population—young adults. Young adults are those individuals between the ages of 18 and 25. The recidivism rate for young adults has remained at 75% for more than 40 years according to Travis et al. (2015). There is a growing interest among both practitioners and scholars of the unique factors associated with young adult recidivism. Davis and Bozick (2013) suggested that understanding recidivism simply as a return to criminal activity by an ex-offender is an incomplete and flawed understanding of a phenomenon that will only yield flawed and incomplete outcomes. Young adults comprise 10% of the general population yet account for 29% of the corrections populations. The recidivism rate among young adults is 76% at the three-year post-release anniversary and 84% at the five-year post-release anniversary. Velazquez (2013) suggested that young adults are in a transition period of their lives, not yet fully matured physiologically, mentally, or psychologically. She contends that young adults are closer in brain development and in social skills, particularly spontaneous behavior, to youth than they are to adults.

Recidivism is a term used by the criminal justice system to describe recriminalization by a former prisoner. The term is also associated with the success or failure of intervention programs provided to prisoners during incarceration such as education, substance disorders, and anger management. The act of re-criminalization is, according to Davis and Bozick (2013), one element of many that comprise recidivism. The clinical definition of recidivism speaks only to the act committed by an individual, not the individual himself (*Webster's New World Basic Dictionary of American English,* 1998). The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism

acknowledges the clinical definition of recidivism and has broadened the scope of the clinical definition of recidivism by studying four life experiences of young adults to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. The four life experiences include prenatal influences, family, education, and socio-economics.

The criminal justice system has reused failed interventions for more than 40 years and the outcomes remain unchanged (Travis et al., 2015). Education programs, anger management programs, and therapeutic intervention programs failed to accomplish the desired outcome of changed behavior. Legislators continue to reduce funding for correctional education programs while simultaneously increasing funding for criminal justice infrastructure. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (2011) commented:

> The outdated public safety agenda that has driven prison expansion has a dramatically disproportionate impact on certain communities. In the major cities of every state, there are a small number of neighborhoods for which taxpayers are asked to spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to cycle residents between prison and the community. At the same time that these neighborhoods' contact with the institutions of criminal justice becomes commonplace, they are also witnessing educational opportunities evaporate with repeated cuts to education budgets. (p. 16)

The NAACP suggests that increased funding for the correctional justice infrastructure and educational funding for targeted neighborhoods are diametrically opposed, particularly for the most vulnerable and least affluent populations; communities of low income, communities of color, and communities with little political influence.

Review of Research Questions

I constructed this study within the framework of both the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory. These two theoretical frameworks are complementary to one

another and provided a structure from which the reality of the participants' lived experiences was documented. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provided the framework through which the lived experiences of the three incarcerated, young adult, African American males was understood.

The Social Constructivist Theory provided a broad, overarching framework through which the interviewees told their lived experiences. Additionally, the Social Constructivist Theory provided both discipline and structure for the researcher to retell the lived experiences of the participants without altering the reality of their lived experiences. The Critical Race Theory provided a narrower, more focused lens through which to view the unique racial realities of the participants' lived experiences. Using the two theories to frame the study resulted in a holistic image of the racially tainted lived experiences of the three African American male participants.

There were two questions that guided this study. First, "What are the perceptions, lived experiences, and beliefs of the three incarcerated, young adult, African American males in a maximum-security prison?" The second question was, "How do incarcerated, young adult, African American males understand what caused them to recidivate?"

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions, lived experiences, and beliefs of the three incarcerated, young adult, African American males in a maximum-security prison? The three participants in this study each shared similar perceptions of their lived experiences. They believed that they were responsible for their actions and the consequences resulting from their actions. Mr. C justified his behavior when he recalled that "the consequences were never that severe, so I would just steal whatever I wanted," and he continued doing the things he had always done.

Each of the participants expressed his awareness of inherent racism in his life, more in terms of racism being the reality he was born into and was destined to live with, rather than a deliberate effort by society to oppress him or to intentionally discriminate against him. Delgado

and Stefancic (2017) wrote that "racism is ordinary, not aberrational, the way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (p. 8). The reality of having only one black teacher during his educational experience and recalling that they were too busy for him because they were helping other children smacks of racism, subliminal as it may have been. That was the reality of the three participants in this study.

Prenatal experiences. The three incarcerated, young adult, African American male participants lived and reported life experiences indicated that there was no substance use or abuse by either biological parent. This finding is contrary to the findings of the literature review (American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, 2014, Conners et al. 2003; Winters) which indicated there is strong evidence demonstrating that parental substance or alcohol abuse increases a child's risk for behavioral problems that include drug and alcohol abuse, social-skills deficits, and low educational attainment. While each of the three participants in this study exhibited one or all of the outcomes associated with parental substance abuse, each participant indicated neither parent used drugs. The findings of this study regarding pre-natal experiences need further research.

Family. All the participants expressed a sensitivity about their African American ethnicity and the hopelessness each had because of a perceived excessive presence of the police in their lives. The participants did not view police as bad people, rather as a social institution that created feelings of unintended frustration that evoked a sense of surrender to defeat. In other words, if a group of young African Americans gathered on a street corner to socialize, and a police car pulled up to the corner, the young people would regress into a mindset that created thoughts of frustration, belittlement, intimidation, and surrender to the notion that since the 'cops' are checking to see if we are committing a crime, we may as well commit one. Mr. B expressed the feelings of the participants in the following comment, "As soon as they see a

couple of black people together they already think something is wrong; it's like you can't really be outside; not unless you're doing something wrong." The police presence was intimidating and counterproductive, and racially motivated and driven.

   Parental absence. Paternal absence was the norm for each participant in this study. Two of the participants lived in two-parent, two-income families. Their reality was that both parents left the home very early in the morning, sometimes before the children were awake, and did not return home until after working a 12-hour shift. The third participant live in a single-parent, single-income family with uncertain job security and substandard wages.

   A common lived experience of the three participants was the absence of a father figure in their daily lives. Mr. A's father was incarcerated for three and a half years during Mr. A's early puberty years. Not only was Mr. A incarcerated at age 11, he had no father figure or a role model. Mr. B's father was incarcerated when Mr. B was 14 years old. Mr. B's father spent three and a half years in prison. Mr. B was without a father or role model for three and a half years. Mr. C's father was not an active part of his life. Mr. C was raised by his working Mom. He noted that his father was absent for 14 years due to incarceration and that he only visited his father three or four times in 14 years. He further confided that, "I really did not know who my father was, I thought he was somebody else." The paternal absence was a consistent factor in each of the participant's lives.

   The Pew Charitable Trusts: Pew Center on the States (2010) reported, "One in nine African American children in the United States has an incarcerated parent." (as cited in the National Resource Center on Children & Family of the Incarcerated, 2016, p. 1). For two of the three participants, paternal absence manifested itself through a two-income family where both parents worked outside the home, drug dealing to support insufficient income, by incarceration, or by being a non-participating father. These dysfunctional father-son relationships exhibited

outcomes of "trauma, shame, and stigma" for the participants (as cited in NRCCFI, p. 1). Travis et al. (2015) reported that "from 1980 to 2000 children with incarcerated fathers increased from about 350,000 to 2.1 million—about 3% of all U. S. children. From 1991 to 2007, children with a father or mother in prison increased 77% and 131% respectively" (p. 4). The drug influence was created by a financial need to feed, clothe, and provide shelter for the families of those men, not necessarily to satisfy an individual desire to commit a crime.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) has long suggested that there are basic needs that must be met by the individual to survive. Among those basic survival needs are food, shelter, and water. Other higher order needs will only be satisfied once the lower order needs have been met. Each of the three families of the participants was at the lowest survival level, physiological needs. Haskins (2015) asserted that certain early life experiences had significant impact on the psychological, emotional, and behavioral health of children. According to Haskins (2015) research has demonstrated "a profoundly negative impact on children whose fathers were incarcerated" (p. 18), and while not generalizable, the lived experience of these participants supports that assertion.

The Influence of Drugs. The lived experiences of the participants were varied yet the parallels among them are noteworthy. Each participant was born into a family that had biological linkages to drugs. Mr. A was raised by his older brothers and was used as a pawn in their drug dealing business, only to be arrested at age 11 for his involvement with drugs.

There was a family pattern of incarceration for the drug influence in Mr. B's family. The father served three and a half years for dealing drugs when Mr. B was 14 years old Mr. B's three older brothers were all incarcerated for drug dealing. Mr. B was first incarcerated when he was 16 years old, the midway point of his father's incarceration, for drug dealing.

Mr. C's father was sentenced to 20 years for drug charges; he completed 14 years of the sentence. Mr. C visited his father in prison three or four times during the 14-year incarceration. Mr. C's life coincidentally took a noticeable turn in a different direction at the time of his father's incarceration; even though the father was not an active presence in his life. Mr. C first used marijuana when he was 13 years of age.

Hussong et al. (2008) estimated that "11% of all children live in families where one or more parents abuse alcohol or other drugs . . . some studies estimate that as many as half of these children will develop a substance use disorder by young adulthood" (p. 2). The drug connection in this study was not from parental consumption but from drug dealing. This finding was unanticipated. It also does not corroborate the findings of Winters (2006), the American Academy of Experts (2014), Conners et al. (2003), nor Fahey (2017). In each family's case, incomes, even when both parents worked full time jobs outside the home, were not adequate to support the basic physiological needs of the family.

Solis et al. (2012) reported that children of substance using parents were more than twice as likely as their peers to have some sort of dependency disorder by the time they were young adults. Solis et al. continued, suggesting that "alcohol and/or drug use by one or both parents has the potential to be, and in some cases, is, the gateway to creating dysfunctional children, either in-utero or postpartum" (p. 1). Substance use by parents is an issue that is gaining greater awareness among scholars and medical professionals.

Education. Each inmate participant struggled with education. Poor attendance, uninterested or unresponsive teachers, expulsions, poor behavior, lack of parental supervision, incarceration, and individual disinterest were all contributing factors to the participants below average performances. Additionally, the conspicuous absence of African American teachers in the educational experience of the three participants is a reality each participant remembered.

That is the racism Delgado & Stefancic ((2016) described in the Critical Race Theory. That was the reality of the three participants in this study.

The 19th century assembly line model of education developed by Horace Mann remains intact in many prison education programs. The world is approaching the quarter century mark of the 21st century. The 21st century is the age of technological innovation, the digital age, the age of computer literacy, a time when technology is no longer a scientific experiment but a necessary survival tool. Prison education programs and corrections bureaucracies must embrace and implement the power of technology aided education to be successful agents for rehabilitation, work ready ex-offenders, and transformative change.

Technology driven education. The use of technology in prison education remains an anomaly, yet both public and private education programs are technology-based and computer-driven. Prison education programs have unique circumstances that require specific, well researched, and properly implemented procedures that will enable greater use of technology aided learning. Security is a paramount concern of both the corrections bureaucracies and the education bureaucracies that serve within the correction bureaucracies. Collaborative initiatives directed toward implementing secure and safe technology driven education can no longer be delayed; the time is now, the excuses are unjustifiable, and human beings are being denied their natural right to an education.

Reframing the Adult Prison Education Experience. Alexander Kapp, a German educator, first introduced the term andragogy in 1833. Andragogy is the art and science of adult learning. Malcolm Knowles, a 20th century American educator, further developed the concept of andragogy. Knowles published four assumptions about adult learning in 1980: self-concept, adult learner experiences, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning. He added a fifth in 1984, motivation to learn. Knowles published the four principles of adult learning:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction

2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities

3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life

4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content centered.

Incarcerated adults are not involved in the planning process of their instruction. Inclusion happens once a learning experience is completed—for example, a formative assessment has been administered, then feedback is given in the form of a grade and suggested learning reinforcement recommendations. Education and educators must drive the planning of the learning experience down to the student and teacher level. Adult learning must be immediately relevant. Each incarcerated student has a unique circumstance, unique immediate needs, and unique future plans; those are their realities and are a critical part of the educational planning process.

I have changed the education experience for my students by reframing and renaming what happens in the learning environment. The physical space where students come to learn is referred to as a learning environment. There is no classroom. I have incorporated elements of Maria Montessori's methods into the adult learning environment. Students have a specific learning plan developed to assist them in defining the knowledge they must acquire. I am a resource for them as they work to discover that knowledge in the learning environment. They are free to decide what they want to learn, and how they want to learn, provided the energy they are expending is being channeled toward creating learning plan outcomes. The student has become the owner of his own education.

Research Question 2

How did the three incarcerated, young adult African American males understand what caused them to recidivate? There was unanimity among the three participants to this question;

money. Each interviewee wanted or needed money; money they were able to obtain quickly, by selling drugs. The participants learned that dealing in drugs was a remedy to their physiological needs; that drug money would buy clothes and food; survival items they did not always have. They were modeling learned behavior from intended or unintended role models who dealt in drugs as a way to satisfy their physiological needs for food, clothing, and shelter. The more drugs they sold, the more money they could obtain. The longer they sold drugs, the more likely they could start their own business with their own clients.

The lure of material and physical objects was a prevalent motivator among the participants. While he was playing football, Mr. C found role models in sports figures. Once he quit playing football, his role models shifted to people who had nice cars, expensive clothes and pretty women. All the participants lived lives of poverty; not enough money for clothes; only one income in the household; too many children and not enough to go around; fathers not in their children's lives; unintended actions taken to survive.

Family

The three participants each lived in a dysfunctional family situation; parents who were rarely present in their lives, incarcerated fathers, and drug involved family members. Each participant expressed resentment that their fathers were not a greater part of their lives. Mr. A was the fifth of six children, raised by his four elder brothers. Mr. B was the third of 11 children. He shared in the responsibility of raising his younger siblings. Mr. B noted that his father was openly involved in drugs to support the family needs. Mr. B's father was arrested and did time for drug dealing. That changed everything in Mr. B's life. Mr. C was the fourth of six children. Mr. C had the same biological father as one of his sisters; all the siblings had the same biological mother. Mr. C recalled growing up as a positive experience, one that was subdued when talking about his father, whom he met for the first time during the father's incarceration. He shared with

me, "I didn't think he was my Dad, I thought someone else was my Dad." Family was both elusive and disheartening to the participants of the study.

Education

The lens through which the three participants viewed education as children differed from the young adult lens they viewed education during our interview sessions. As young children the participants lacked parental involvement in their education. Their parents were away to work before they awoke in the morning and returned to home after they returned from school in the evening. Early in their lives the participants realized they could miss school without consequence which led to truancy. The lack of parental involvement and guidance was reflected in poor grades as well as troubled behavior.

Each of the participants stated they experienced a disconnect in their educational experience because they had only one teacher of color during their active education. Mr. C stated he had little high school experience. He was not connected to his family at that time. He had no teacher role model in school. He had behavior issues that eventually led to being expelled in 9th grade.

The opportunity for an education existed for each of the participants. The framework for achieving an education was negatively impacted by the lived realities of each participant. Each participant lived in a dysfunctional family. Each participant lived in a family existing at the survival level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Each had limited exposure to adult role models both in the family and in the education setting.

Socio-economic Oppression

Poverty was the reality experienced by each of the participants, particularly in their childhood years. The lure of making money quickly attracted each of them. Mr. C was an accomplished football player as a young teenager. The power of money, acquired by selling

drugs, to buy nice clothes, to afford fancy cars, and to impress the opposite sex was a short-term fix to a long-term problem. That easy money vanished as quickly as it appeared.

Recommendations for Action

There is not a single solution to the phenomenon of young adult recidivism. There are multiple causes of recidivism, and the problem requires multiple answers. The answers will come from both federal and state governments, local communities, faith-based organizations, social action organizations, families, professionals, and scholars.

Recidivism is a phenomenon that has both local and national implications. Efforts at reducing recidivism will need to occur at both the local and national level. The recommendations and concerns of stakeholders at the local level are both real and necessary; and they must be heard, processed, and acted upon in good faith by stakeholders who have public policy responsibility.

Pre-natal Experience

There were no indications of pre-natal influence from this study. However, on a larger scale, other studies (Winters (2006), Connors et al. (2003), and Fahey (2017) have concluded that the use of drugs by parents affected the learning capability of children as well as creating anti-social behavior patterns. Pre-natal experiences, as indicated by the above studies, are contributing factors to the unintended consequences of substance use and abuse. Continued study of this component of the Holistic Understanding of Recidivism is necessary in future studies.

Family

The family structure of the three participants was unstable, perhaps even dysfunctional. Both parents of one family worked outside the home diminishing the parent-child relationship. One family was a single parent family in which the mother did not have stable employment,

moving from one job to another. A third family's parents both worked outside the home and the father supplemented the two incomes by selling drugs; subsequently being arrested and incarcerated for drug dealing. Additionally, in the absence of parental presence, one family relied on the four oldest siblings to raise the two younger children. The four older brothers were not only drug dealers but also used their sibling(s) to transact drug deals.

The absence of the father figure causes trauma in a child's life. Disruptive behavior, anger issues, and impaired learning are outcomes that result from the absence of the father. There are similar undesirable outcomes in children of incarcerated fathers. Not only is it necessary to change the undesirable embedded behaviors learned from the actions of family members, it is important to develop positive replacement behaviors. Partnerships with local institutions of higher learning graduate programs would provide mutually beneficial opportunities for both prisoners and graduate students. Art majors could be given practicum credits for teaching art to inmates. Graduate level music majors could teach and mentor young adult inmates who have musical talent whether that be voice, instrument, or composition.

The Influence of Drugs

The influence of drugs is a multifaceted problem that requires continued research and renewed thinking. Therapeutic and rehabilitative intervention programs should be evaluated and reengineered to produce more consistent outcomes. The influence of drugs impacts many components of the family; children, community, education, economy, faith, and socio-economics. Community participation is necessary to remediate the drug problem. Faith-based organizations, particularly churches, synagogues, and mosques, need to have a more active, positive presence as problem solvers. The judicial system has to reevaluate the merits of the present sentencing guidelines and determine a fairer balance between parental incarceration and next generation criminality. Corrections bureaucracies need to implement more efficient use of

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology. GPS should be used with offenders on parole and or probation. Permitting parolees and probationers to check in with the correction system via GPS rather than having to physically visit the correction facility would enable parolees and probationers to hold full time jobs without the requirement of interrupted work hours. The drug problem needs to be studied as a separate entity but also as part of the Holistic of Understanding Recidivism.

A Three-track Correctional System

The present two track correctional system is not effective. It ignores the unique needs of an entire age group, the young adult. There is a juvenile track that addresses the juvenile population; those under 18 years of age. There is an adult track that encompasses the young adult population, those between 18 and 25 years of age, along with adults, those over 25 years of age. The correctional system needs to establish a third track, one for the young adults.

Young adults, those individuals between 18 and 25 years of age, have unique physical, mental, physiological, and other developmental needs unlike both juveniles and adults. Young adults are not fully developed. Studies have shown that while young adults tend to be closer in proximity developmentally to juveniles, particularly brain development and social development, they have unique needs different from both juveniles and adults. Incarcerated young adults should not be in the company of adult offenders from whom they can learn the workings of adult crime.

The Judicial System

There should be a separate judicial system created specifically for juvenile and young adult drug offenders. The bureaucracy would be responsible for adjudicating all juvenile and young adult drug cases. The judicial system would create a new career pathway unique and specific to the needs of the particular moral and ethical challenges relevant to those two age

groups. The judges and lawyers from the Juvenile and Young Adult Drug Jurisprudence Division would be required to have specific post graduate credentialing in the physiology, psychology, and sociology of juvenile and young adult drug crime.

Education

Education is an essential component of a successful reintegration program. Many 21st century employers will not hire individuals without a high school diploma or a GED®. Wade (2007) observed that "If the purpose of [correctional] education programs is to train individuals to become productive members of society, future research should focus on aligning individual potential to realistic job training that leads to actual employment opportunities" (p. 31). Education and training are inextricably linked to successful reintegration into society as well as to successful job placement.

Prison education is following the trend in general education to gravitate toward a curriculum centered on career and college readiness. The reality of prison education is that college readiness is a more safety secure option than career readiness courses such as culinary arts, automotive technology, and building trades credentialing. Sadly, many incarcerated individuals have financial obligations that require them to have immediate employability skills upon reentry to society; the correctional system needs to reevaluate how this critical area of reentry can be better addressed.

Lockwood (2012) et al. reported that the difference in the recidivism rates between offenders with a college education (31%) and those with an education less than high school (55.9%) was 24.9%. There are two groups of offenders who work at a disadvantage when pursuing an education credential, students with IEP's, and students with impaired learning capacity. A special education student is given an IEP up until the age of 21. At age 21, the same student with the same special needs, is, by government standards, no longer eligible to receive an

IEP. The purpose of the IEP is to create a tailor-made educational learning plan that aides the student to be able to learn more effectively and to do so on a more level playing field. There is an argument that questions the validity of changed legal status merely due to age. The same argument holds true for classifying an offender as a juvenile one day and on that person's 18th birthday he or she is no longer a juvenile but an adult.

The second group of offenders who are not recognized as learning impaired but are placed in peer normal learning environments are those with impaired learning capacity, a physiological condition that is genetically transmitted. For this study, impaired learning capacity is a learning dysfunction resulting from substance use or abuse by one or both parents. Offenders with impaired learning capacity are expected to compete as equals among peers who are not suffering from a learning disadvantage. This kind of dysfunctional learning arrangement perpetuates failure as acceptable and success as unattainable. Neither outcome is acceptable.

Socio-economics

The economic fortunes of the three families of the participants of this study were connected to low educational achievement, involvement with the criminal justice and correctional systems, and drug affiliation. Each parent was reported to have graduated from high school. Even though academically credentialed, the academic level was at the lowest benchmark. The opportunity for sustainable well-paying jobs did not exist. This scenario created other unanticipated consequences.

The reality of low wages created the need for both parents to work outside the home. Even with both parents working outside the home two incomes were not sufficient to support the financial needs of the families. One unintended consequence was to subsidize the low wages by selling drugs. The real yet unwanted outcome of selling drugs was arrest and incarceration which resulted in a further decline in wages.

Conclusion

This narrative study examined the lived experiences of three incarcerated, young adult, African American males who had multiple encounters with the criminal justice system. The framework for this study was the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory. The impetus for this study evolved from a personal transformative event in my life; the life changing realization that my class of juvenile offenders were all people of color and that I was the only white person in the classroom. Racism, even though subliminal, was a reality, not only to the ten students of color but also for me, the only white person in the classroom. Images are real; they are prophetic; they are life changing.

The lived experiences of the three incarcerated, young adult, African American males were retold to affirm the realities expressed by the participants; that racism truly is an innate part of the American character. Racism can be violent, or it can be very subtle; regardless of its tone, it remains racism. For an African American child to experience the pedagogy of whiteness in her or his educational experience is testimony to the systemic racism that is prevalent in American society. For a two parent, two income African American family not to be able to live comfortably is a socio-economic form of racism. For a parent to have to supplement a two-income family by selling drugs, just to make ends meet, is a form of economic racism. These images were the lived experiences of the three incarcerated, African American males who participated in this study. Racism, subdued or subtle or flagrant, was their reality. Their very survival pitted one race against another; white against black, fortune against failure, opportunity against oppression, and prosperity against poverty.

This study had a sample population of three people, keeping with the small sample population size recommended for a narrative study. Consequently, no generalizable knowledge can be derived from this study. The purpose of this study was to tell the lived experiences of the

three incarcerated, young adult, African American males within the framework of the Social Constructivist Theory and the Critical Race Theory in effort to understand the "how" and "why" of recidivism. Additionally, the findings of this study are the basis for continuing research to expand and grow a Holistic Understanding of Recidivism.

This study is like a grain of sand dropped into calm waters. Although it is singular, it will create ripples, and there will be many. This study is just the beginning, the impetus to embrace the ripples of change, discovery, and a renewed understanding of the dignity of every human being. This grain of hope must not be extinguished but embraced, emboldened, and explored. This study is not a finished product but a ground work for future possibilities, continued research, positive change, and renewed belief that humanity, despite its innate imperfection, will continue to strive to make our world a better, fairer, and more equitable place for all human beings.

The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism is a new way of looking at an age-old phenomenon, the re-criminalization of individuals. The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism demands more than a clinical definition of a human experience, it finds its very nature in the human person. Understanding the human motivations that drive recidivism will provide a new paradigm for an old problem.

References

Agnes, M. (1998). Webster's New World Basic Dictionary of American English. In J. Goldman
(Ed.), *Webster's New World basic dictionary of American English* (pp. 1–1038). Boston:
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Anfara, V. A., & Mertz, N. T. (2013). *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research* (2 ed.).
Los Angeles: SAGE.

Attorney General Eric Holder convenes inaugural cabinet-level reentry council. (inaugural
cabinet-level reentry council). Retrieved from www.ceanational.org

Bidwell, A. (2013). Prison education programs could save money. *US News & World Report.*
Retrieved from http>//www.usnews.com/news/2013/08/22/report-prison-education-
programs-couls

Black, H. C. (1976). In *Black's law dictionary with pronunciations* (5th ed.). St. Paul, MN: West
Publishing Company.

Blessett, B. (2014). *Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline: Reconfiguring the system from
investing in the failure of the "other"* [case study]. Retrieved from researchgate.net:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272622774_Dismantling_the_School-to-
Prison_Pipeline_Reconfiguring_the_System_from_Investing_in_the_Failure_of_the_
Other

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2016). In *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map
from beginning to end* (3rd ed., pp. 37–60). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Carson, E. A., & Golinelli, D. (2014). *Prisoners 2012: Trends in admissions and releases 1991–
2012*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from
https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p12tar9112.pdf

Caudill, K. (2014). *Parental substance abuse and its effect on child development* [white paper].

    Florida: University of Miami.

Conners, N. A., Bradley, R. H., Mansell, L. W., Liu, J. Y., Roberts, T. J., Burgdorf, K., &

    Herrell, J. M. (2003). Children of mothers with serious substance abuse problems: An

    accumulation of risks. *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, *29*(4), 743–

    758. http://dx.doi.org/10.1081/ADA-120026258

Council of State Governments Justice Center. (2015). *Reducing recidivism and improving other*

    outcomes for young adults in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. Retrieved

    from www.csgjusticecenter.org

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*

    (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Davis, L. M., & Bozick, R. (2013). RAND Mega-study. Retrieved from media@rand.org

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). Introduction, Basic Tenets of Critical Race Theory. In

    Critical race theory: An introduction (3rd ed., pp. 1–199). New York: New York

    University Press.

Donnini, D. (n.d.). *The role of student voice and choice in learner-centered competency reform*

    (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://dune.une/thesis/27

Duncan, A. (2013). What Arne Duncan Did to American Education [fact sheet]. *The Hechinger*

    Report. Retrieved from http://hechingerreport.org/what-arne-duncan-did-to-american-

    education-and-whether-it-will-last/

Durose, M. R., Cooper, A. D., & Snyder, H. N. (2014). *Recidivism of prisoners released in 30*

    states in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010 (NCJ 244205). Retrieved from National

    Institute for Justice website:

    http://www.nij.gov/topics/corrections/recidivism/pages/welcome.aspx

Esperian, J. H. (2010). The effects of prison education on recidivism [special section]. *Journal of Correctional Education*, *61*, 316–347. Retrieved from

http://search.proquest.com.une.idm.oclc.org/docview/871418247?accountid=12756

Gaes, G. (2008). *The impact of prison education programs on post-release outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/gaesthe effectivenessof-prisoneducationprograms.pdf

Goldstein, D. (2016, October 27). [Press release]. Science—and law enforcement—are rethinking young adults.

Government printing office. (2014). *Forum on child and family statistics*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Haskins, A. (2015, July). Paternal incarceration and child-reported behavioral functioning at age 9. *Social Science Research*, *52*, 18–33. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2015.01.001

Hopkins, K. (2013, November 13). Is prisoner education the key to reducing crimes? [special section]. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://huffingtonpost.com/kiernan-hopkins/is-prisoner-education-the_b_3902205.html

Hussong, A. M. (2008). Disaggregating the distal, proximal, and time-varying effects of parent alcoholism on children's internalizing symptoms [special section]. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *36*(3), 335–346. Retrieved from

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3676900/?report=classic

Jealous, B. T., Brock, R. M., & Huffman, A. (2011). *Misplaced priorities: Over incarcerate, under educate* [policy brief]. Baltimore: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Jimenez, J., Pasztor, E. M., Chambers, R. M., & Fujii, C. P. (2014). *Social policy and social change: Toward the creation of social and economic justice* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Kiefer, S., & Veit, G. C. (n.d.). *Research with prisoners*. Retrieved from citiprogram.org:

> https://www.citiprogram.org/members/index.cfm?pageID=665&ce=1

King, R., & Elderbroom, B. (2014). *Improving recidivism as a performance measure*. Retrieved

> from http://www.urban.org/research/publication/improving-recidivism-performance-

> measure

Klein, C. (2017). Department of Corrections Facilities. Retrieved from

> https://owa.state.de.us/owa

Lahm, K. (2009). *Educational participation and inmate misconduct* [Monograph].

> http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10509670802572235

LoBuglio, S., & Lyman, M. (2006). *Whys and hows of measuring recidivism* [policy brief].

> Retrieved from urban.org:

> http://www.urban.org/UploadPDF/Lyman_LoBuglio_Recidivism.pdf

Lockwood, S. N. (2012). The effect of correctional education on post-release employment and

> recidivism: A 5 year follow-up study in the State of Indiana [Abstract]. *Crime &*

> *Delinquency*, *58*(3), 380-396. Abstract retrieved from

Loeber, R., Farrington, D. P., & Petechuk, D. (2015). From juvenile delinquency to young adult

> offending. [Study Group on the Transition from Juvenile Delinquency to Adult Crime].

> National Institute of Justice. Retrieved from NIJ.gov:

> http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/Pages/delinquency-to-adult-offending.aspx

Maslow, A. H. (1943). *A theory of human motivation*. https://doi.org/org/10.1037/h0054346

Mason, K. V. (2016, January 21). Environmental scan of developmentally-informed practices for

> young adults in criminal justice system. [NIJ comment]. Retrieved from National

> Institute of Justice: https://www.hks.harvard.edu/programs/criminaljustice/research-

> publications/incarceration

Matthew, E. W., & Carrie, P. (2015). Smart decarceration: Guiding concepts for an era of criminal justice transformation, *CSD Working Papers,* Nos. 15-53.

McKenna, G. (1984). *A guide to the Constitution: That delicate balance* (1 ed.). New York: .

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.merriam-webster.com

Mitchell, O. W., Wilson, D. B., & MacKenzie, D. L. (2007, September). Does incarceration-based drug treatment reduce recidivism? A Meta-analytic synthesis of the research [article]. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11292-007-9040-2

Moldoff, D. K. (2006). What is the GED? Retrieved from http://www.collegetransfer.net/AskCT/WhatisaGED

Mottern, R. (2012, August). Educational alliance: the importance of relationships in adult education with court-mandated students [article]. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com.une.idm.oclc.orgtid=12756

Musgrove, K. R. (2012). *PIRATES: A Program for offenders transitioning into the world of work*. Retrieved from proquest.com: http://search.proquest.com.une.idm.oclc.org/docview/1115591551?accountid=12756

National Institute of Justice. (2016). *Programs and legislation targeting justice-involved young adults* [White paper]. Retrieved from http://nij.gov/topics/crime/pages/programs-and-legislation-targeting-justice-involved-young-adults.aspx

Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What race got to do with it? Critical race theory's conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology [special section]. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 7–22.

Petersilia, J. (2011). *Beyond the prison bubble.* National Institute for Justice. Retrieved from nij.gov: https://www.nij.gov/journals/268/pages/prison-bubble.aspx

Petersilia, J. (2013). *California prison downsizing and its impact on local criminal justice systems*. Retrieved from harvardlpr.com: http://harvardlpr.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/HLP208.pdf

Petersilia, J. (2014). *Beyond the prison bubble* (The National Institute for Justice). Retrieved from: https://www.nij.gov/journals/268/pages/prison-bubble.aspx

Pettus-Davis, C., & Epperson, M. W. (2015). *From mass incarceration to smart decarceration.* American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare - 4. Retrieved from aaswsw.org

Pew Charitable Trusts, The . (2013). *Prison time served and recidivism*. Washington D.C.: The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Porter, L. C., Bushway, S. D., Tsao, H., & Smith, H. L. (January 2016). How the U.S. prison boom has ca [hanged the age distribution of the prison population]. *Criminology*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12094

Recidivism. (2014). Retrieved from National Institute for Justice: http://www.nij.gov/topics/corrections.recidivism/pages/welcome.aspx

Richardson, S. (2008). *Project seeks to cut recidivism among former prisoners*. Retrieved from: https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/PRISONER_REENTRY_080827.PDF

Ruggero, T., Dougherty, J., & Klofas, J. (2015). *Measuring recidivism: Definitions, errors, and data sources* [Working Paper #2015-03]. Retrieved from rit.edu: https://www.rit.edu/. . ./2015-03%20-%Measuring%20Recidivism%20-%Definition

Shively, R. S. (2016). Corrections today [article]. *Corrections Today*, *78*(1), 46–50. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com.une.idm.oclc.org/docview/1755849434

Sipes, L. A. (2010). *Percent of released prisoners returning to incarceration*. Retrieved from http://www.crimeinamerica.net/about-this-site/

Solis, J. M. (2012). Understanding the diverse needs of children whose parents abuse substances. *Current Drug Abuse Review*, 135–147. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3676900

State of recidivism: The revolving door of America's prisons. (2011). Retrieved from www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/agency/.../pcs_assets/2011/pewstateofrecidivismpdf.pdf

Taliaferro, W., Pham, D., & Cielinski, A. (2016). *From incarceration to reentry: A look at trends, gaps, and opportunities in correctional education and training* [white paper]: CLASP.

The sentencing project. (2016). Retrieved from https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/resources/fact-s

Travis, J., Western, B., & Redburn, S. (2015, July 22). *The growth of incarceration in the United States: Exploring causes and consequences*. National Research Council of the National Academies. Retrieved from http://journalistsresource.org/studies/government/criminal-justice/u-s

Velazquez, T. (2013). *The case for a young adult criminal justice system* [policy paper]. Retrieved from https://chroniclesofsocialchange.org/policy-paper/the-case-for-a-young-adult-criminal-justice-system-by-tracy-velazquez/2683

Wade, B. (2007). Studies of correctional education programs [article]. *Adult Basic Education & Literacy Journal, 1*(1), 27-31.

Winters, A. (2006). Influential factors of parental substance and alcohol abuse on children's academic achievement [article]. *PSU McNair Scholars Online Journal*. Retrieved from http//pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/mcnair

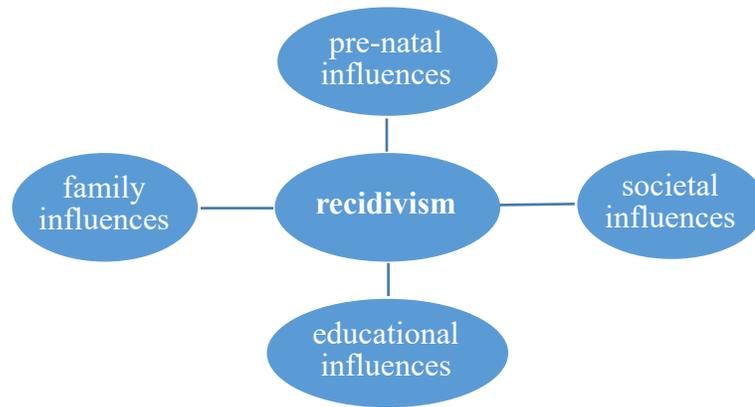Appendix A

The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism

Figure 2. The Holistic Model of Recidivism

The Holistic Understanding of Recidivism not only recognizes the negative outcome of failed

incarceration interventions but also seeks to understand recidivism by examining pre-natal and

post-partum events, family influence, education, and socio-economic influences.

Appendix B

The Traditional Model of Recidivism
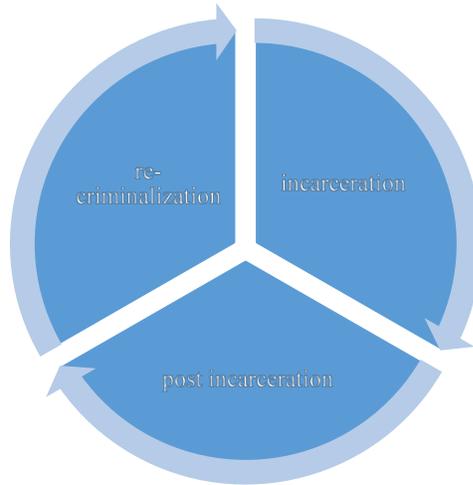
The tactical understanding of recidivism depicts a single moment when a criminal act is committed that returns an ex-offender to the criminal justice system. There is no consideration of the events that may have played a role in the recidivist act other than the failure of intervention programs administered while incarcerated. The traditional understanding of recidivism begins at incarceration, is continued during the post-incarceration period when a criminal act takes place that results in re-incarceration.

Demographic Data Chart

	Mr. A	Mr. B	Mr. C
I am, single, engaged, married, divorced.	single	single	single
I am one of ____ children.	11	6	4
I am the ____ child of ____ children.	3rd	4th	
I completed ____ grade.	8th	9th	9th
I attended school through ____ grade	9th	9th	9th
My favorite subject in school was	Math	Math	Math
My least favorite subject in school was	Soc Sci	Science	Science
My family's income was approximately $ per year.	$50,000	unsure	unsure
I grew up in a two-parent home ____yes ____no.	yes	yes	yes
Someone other than my biological parents raised me	no	no	no
My parents owned their home ____yes ____no.	yes	no	no
The highest grade my mother completed was	12th	12th	12th
The highest grade my father completed was	12th	12th	12th
There was substance use in my mother's family	no	no	no
There was substance use in my father's	no	yes	yes
I identify with an organized religion	yes	no	no
I participate in the religion I identify with	yes	no	no

Appendix C illustrates the participant responses to the Demographic Data Form.

Themes and Participants

THEME	Mr. A	Mr. B	Mr. C			
Family						
parents in family	2	2	1			
mother incarcerated	no	no	no			
father incarcerated	yes	yes	yes			
crime	drug dealing	drug dealing	drug dealing			
your age at the time	12	14/17	8			
number of siblings						
mother's education	high school diploma	high school diploma	high school diploma			
father's education	high school diploma	high school diploma	high school diploma			
Education						
highest grade complete	8	10	9			
I.E.P.	yes	no	no			
alternative school	yes	no	yes			
prison education	yes	yes	yes			
GED®	in progress	yes	yes			
Drug Involvement						
kind of iinvolvement	selling/using	selling/ using	using/selling			
self use	marijuana/prescription	prescription	marijuana			
Criminal Justice						
age first involved	12	16	15			
number of incarceratio	20	4	3			
first incarceration	selling drugs	drugs	robbery/gun			
second incarceration		probation violation	gun/drugs			
third incarceration		probation violation	drugs			
reason for criminal act	needed money	needed money	needed money			

Appendix D shows the relationship between themes and participants: family, education, the drug influence, and socioeconomics.

Family Association with the Criminal Justice System (CJS)

Family	Relationship	Cause	Consequence
Mr. A	Father	Sold drugs	3 years in prison
Mr. A	#1 brother	Sold drugs	
Mr. A	#2 brother	Sold drugs	
Mr. A	#3 brother	Sold drugs	
Mr. A	Self	Sold drugs	20 incarcerations
Mr. B	Father	Sold drugs	3½ years in prison
Mr. B	#1 brother	robbery	
Mr. B	#2 brother	Gun charge	13 months in prison; charge dismissed
Mr. B	Self	Drugs	Currently serving
Mr. C	Father	Sold drugs	14 year incarceration
Mr. C	Self	Robbery/gun/drugs	3 separate incarcerations

Appendix E shows the relationship between direct family members who had experiences with the criminal justice system and their relationship to the research participants.