CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Formerly Incarcerated Women: Exploring the Benefits of Mentoring in the Reintegration Process

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Social Work

By

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In collaboration with

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to all the participants who gave up their time to contribute to it. In addition, to my supportive parents, friends, and all the mentors God has blessed me with along my own journey of reintegrating over the last ten years. Finally, to Dr. Pih who pushed me out of my comfort zone and guided me into this project which turned out to be a truly rewarding experience.

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Abstract

Formerly Incarcerated Women: Exploring the Benefits of Mentoring in the Reintegration Process

By

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Master of Social Work

Purpose: This research project proposed to explore the role of mentorship in the reintegration process of formerly incarcerated women. This study sought to understand the reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated women who have had mentors and those who have not. Participants (N=27) were formerly incarcerated women, 18 years and older who were not currently on probation, parole, or being monitored by any form of authority. It was expected that participants who received some form of mentoring would have had more success reintegrating back into society. The findings concurred that successful reintegration was found not only in mentors, but also in having various mentors and a support system that evolves with the formerly incarcerated women's path into a new life as her relational needs change, she begins to heal, and transforms into a new person.

Keywords: formerly incarcerated women, reintegration, reentry, mentoring

Introduction

There are more than 2.3 million people incarcerated in America's prison system which consists of 1719 state prisons, 901 correctional facilities for juveniles, detention centers for immigrants, military prisons, civil commitment centers, 3163 jails, as well as numerous for-profit prisons (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). The prison population grew an astonishing 475% between 1980 and 2008 (Wikoff, Linhorst, & Morani, 2012, p. 289). Although men account for 90% of the prison population (Travis, 2007), women are currently the fastest growing category of prisoners (Cobbina & Bender, 2012, p. 276). Research conducted on violent female offenders found that the majority of their offenses were involved within a domestic setting with the use of violence often being defensive (Willison, 2016).

Research by Travis (2007) reveals that the age of mass incarceration is profoundly affecting the dynamics of human development, relationships between men and women, and the roles women play in the family and society (p. 130). Travis (2007) points out that women are choosing to remain single and not marry because of the limited selection of male partners who can contribute economically and socially to the relationship (p.30). However, formerly incarcerated women can be at-risk for certain situations that are heavily rooted in being dependent on traditional gender socialization that involve empathetic and dependent roles that are expected from women (Henriques & Manatu-Rupert, 2001).

Literature Review

Of the more than 2 million adults incarcerated, 641,000 people exit the correctional system every year (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). During the reintegration process they will face a variety of challenges (Woods, Lanza, Dyson, & Gordon, 2013, p. 830). With the large number of prisoners reentering society, there is great risk to the community which can be negatively affected without the much needed interventions, resources, and supports to help with the reintegration process (Woods et al., 2013, p. 831).

Women and Reintegration

Obtaining legal, stable employment is a crucial factor in successful reintegration that women fall short in finding due to their limited education, employment skills, as well as having higher rates of psychiatric and behavioral issues than men caused by them experiencing higher rates of past trauma inflicted in relational settings (Blitz, 2006). An important aspect of reentry for women is that they have a stronger relational needs than men (Clone & DeHart, 2014, p. 504). A study by Spjeldnes, Jung, and Yamatiani (2014) found that 55% of women in jail have experienced physical and sexual abuse (p.80). Sociologist Diane Russel reports that 25% of all women in the U.S. have been raped and 33% have been sexually abused during childhood (as cited in Herman, 2015, p. 30). Johnson and Lynch (2013) found that 64% of their participants of women who were incarcerated experienced sexual abuse before the age of fourteen and 75% had high scores of dissociation. Howard, Karatzias, Power and Mahoney's study (2017) revealed that 58.4% of female prisoners engage in self harm due to childhood trauma and victimization. This body of research suggests that statistics of victimization among this population may be even higher than 55% and is possibly underreported.

Bahr, Harris, Fisher, and Armstrong (2010) found that of formerly incarcerated women who had difficulty developing new healthy relationships, 90% of them reincarcerate. A consistent relational pattern emerges from the research of formerly incarcerated women suggesting the challenge and need for them to have positive support when returning to the community. Many women will have to return to family homes where drug use is still occurring (Snell-Rood, Staton-Tindall, & Victor, 2015). This can make changing and complying with probation very difficult. Prior research reveals a supportive family and substance abuse treatment while incarcerated to be two important factors in successful reintegration. Drug treatment may be considered a tool that allows for prisoners to change their self-conceptions, increase self-efficacy, and learn new coping skills and techniques (Bahr et al., 2010, p. 684, 686).

Women are more vulnerable for failed reentry and/or reincarceration without having positive family connections (Petersilia, 2003). Cobbina and Bender (2012) found that prosocial behavior for women can be motivated by valuing their children. In addition, they found that some women experience a mental change while incarcerated that results in a loss of desire to continue committing crimes. Both valuing their children and experiencing a mental change while incarcerated that inspires a change in deviant behaviors upon reentry are positive elements of a successful reentry. Formerly incarcerated mothers that had consistent childcare, friends that were supportive, economic resources, employment, and mental health counseling were more successfully integrated in community life (Few-Demo & Arditti, 2014).

Social Learning Theory

Bahr et al. (2010) explain how social learning theorists believe that criminal behavior is learned in the confines of interpersonal relationships. They go on to describe that individuals will exhibit the behavior of those they associate with. If an individual is associating with others who

are involved in criminal activities, they are at high risk of participating in illegal behaviors. However, if an individual is exposed to healthier, functional members of society that model appropriate behavior for them, they will receive positive reinforcements for behaviors and attitudes that are prosocial (p. 669).   During reentry, individuals are especially vulnerable to deviant peers. A high percentage of formerly incarcerated women who had difficulty staying away from old friends reincarcerated. Loneliness and difficulty making new friends, or even knowing where to go to meet new friends, are the two greatest challenges (Bahr et al, 2010, p. 681).

Those who can obtain a job and/or get married are less likely to have time for or be influenced by deviant peers and are more likely to be influenced by law abiding citizens (Bahr et al., 2010, p. 670). This suggests that law abiding marital/relational partners, colleagues and supervisors can be valuable mentors in the reentry process. However, for formerly incarcerated women who are single and remain that way, even having a job can sometimes not be enough to deter them from connecting with old peers because of the loneliness they experience in their new life. For many, all of their old peers are still associated with deviant behavior (Bahr et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Bandura's (1977, 1982) social learning theory highlights an importance on self-efficacy which is a key factor of behavioral change. He believed that self-efficacy determined how one will make judgments and take action, or not, on those actions. Those with low self-efficacy will give up on themselves and responsibilities easier when faced with difficulties. According to this theory, formerly incarcerated individuals with low self-efficacy or a lack of positive role models, or mentors, will have greater challenges changing deviant behaviors to prosocial behaviors, and will struggle complying with parole stipulations (Bahr et al 2010; Bandura 1977, 1982), further increasing their chance of recidivism.

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Mentoring

Mentoring has shown to enhance relational closeness and psychological improvement over time in young adults (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2013; McAllister, Harold, Ahmedani, & Cramer, 2009, p. 91). Mentoring helped individuals with psychiatric disabilities develop an understanding of recovery resulting in fewer hospitalization episodes (Silver, Bricker, Schuster, Pancoe, & Pesta, 2011). Children of incarcerated parents who were mentored developed trust, closeness, and decreased internal and external symptoms (Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, & Hanneman, 2009). In addition, mentors can model appropriate behavior, confidence, and characteristic traits for minority groups in academia or employment settings (McAllister et al., 2009, p. 91). This can be especially beneficial for formerly incarcerated women and the stigma they will have to deal with from having a criminal background (Wikoff et al., 2012; Wilson & Davis, 2006).

Targeted mentoring is a term that refers to the process of aiming mentoring at a specific population (McAllister et al., 2009, p. 89). The process of mentor matching has been studied revealing that same gender matching has little difference in effectiveness in most cases (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). However, positive benefits were found in female mentees who had the same gendered mentors, especially when working in environments that are dominated by males (Frestedt, 1995: Kram, 1985; Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, & Ulku-Steiner, 2006; Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, 2005). McAllister et al. (2009) point out that LGBT mentees in their study did better with mentors who had characteristics or past experience as they did, making them more relatable. Understanding that formerly incarcerated women have a high rate of past trauma in relational settings with men may warrant a higher need for same sex mentoring early in the reintegration process.

Hurd and Zimmerman (2013) found that natural mentoring relationships (non-parental relationships with peers from pre-existing social networks) in conjunction with frequent contact improves psychosocial outcomes of mentees. Natural mentor relationships help mentees develop a secure sense of attachment promoting future positive relationships by improving interpersonal skills (p. 26).

Aims and Objectives

While much research has been conducted with reentry strategies for formerly incarcerated women (e.g. Blitz, 2006; Clone & DeHart, 2014; Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Few-Demo & Arditti, 2014; Spjeldnes, Jung, & Yamatiani, 2014; Wilson & Davis, 2006) and the benefits of mentoring with other populations (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Frestedt, 1995; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2014; Kram, 1985; McAllister et al., 2009; Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, 2005; Shlafer et al, 2009; Silver et al., 2011), there is a lack of research involving the effectiveness of mentoring formerly incarcerated women during the reentry process. Understanding the dynamics at play in the strong relational needs of women and the trauma and deviant behavior that can occur outside of a safe relationship, this study seeks to understand the reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated women who have had mentors and those who have not.

This study used a qualitative approach to gain the perspectives and experiences of formerly incarcerated women's experience with integrating back into society.

Methodology

Research Design

This research is a phenomenological qualitative study conducted through individual in depth interviews used to gather information from the participants. The 15 interview questions attempted to discover how mentoring may have played a role in the reintegration process. After the interviews were conducted the researchers transcribed the audio recordings. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researchers then went over data using Microsoft Word, identifying patterns and themes. As themes arose, specific quotations by participants were used to relate the gathered data with various details of themes.

*Mentoring***:** Participants were asked to think about people who helped them succeed in reintegrating back into society. An example of an interview question is "Has there been a particular person who has helped you overcome these obstacles?" Then they were asked to identify characteristics of that relationship that are significant to them. The feedback from the participants of their mentors, or those who had none, was used in the proposed analyses.

Sample

The sample (N=27) consisted of formerly incarcerated women, 18 years and older who were not currently on probation, parole, or being monitored by any form of authority. Eligible participants were recruited using a snowball sample beginning with currently known formerly incarcerated women, then by recruiting others through them. Additional measures were taken to reach more participants by contacting Homeboys Industries and the Boise Rescue Mission. To ensure confidentiality, the participant names were not included in the interviews prior to data entry. The interviews were identified by a number code. A consent form was given to each participant to read and sign before the study was conducted. There was no payment for

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participation in this research study. There was no cost to the participant for participation in this study. The participant was not reimbursed for any out of pocket expenses, such as parking or transportation fees. No deception was used.

Procedure

A project information form was completed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, Northridge. This study involved approximately 20 minutes to an hour of one-time in-depth interviews. The participants were contacted to set up in-depth interviews in-person or via telephone. Participants were given the option to be interviewed in person, via Skype or by telephone. No participants were interviewed via Skype. All participants who were interviewed via telephone were emailed the adult consent form in advance and returned to the interviewer prior to the interview. Participants were offered the options to be recorded. Handwritten interviews were conducted for those who did not wish to be recorded. During the interviews participants were asked questions about their experiences of reintegration, as well as if they had a mentor, mentors, or none during specific times of difficulties during the reintegration process and at other times of difficulties or transitions in their lives.

<center>**Results**</center>

Participant Characteristics

The demographic information of the participants in this study are (n=9, 33%) identified as White/Caucasian, (n=11,40%) identified as Hispanic, (n=3, 11%) identified as African American, (n=3, 11%) identified as Biracial, and (n=1, 3%) was categorized as other. The mean age of the participants was 44.8, and all 27 participants agreed to be interviewed.

Themes

Several themes emerged as a result of the interviews to include: barriers to recovery, trauma, mental health and substance abuse, and successful reintegration.

Barriers to Recovery

At some moment during the reintegration process, our participants either faced or are facing barriers to recovery. Participants who appear to be at risk for recidivating are those who have not reconciled with family, have no family or no supportive family, are still homeless, unable to pass a criminal background clearance for employment, have a lack of job skills, are disabled, struggle with a lack of trust and/or ability to develop new friendship, are still using substances, or have a lack of therapeutic services available to them in their area.

Passing a criminal background clearance for employment was a common obstacle for our participants. 40% of our participants had some form of issue finding employment due to not passing a criminal background. For instance, "Judith" a 37-year old Hispanic female discussed being hired and then escorted out of the job due to having a criminal background:

> There was a thought that was ... Frustration came in, especially when I'm doing good and I'm trying to get employment, and I had just left the rehab. Now I'm in a sober living. Because of my background, I have a strike, and it was all violent crime, so I was walked off from two jobs, so I actually ended up having the job. I qualified for it, and because of my offense, when it came back, the clearance, they utilized security

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and everything to walk me off the premises. I was really to a point where you get really depressed and discouraged because you want to do something different, and that's what led me here to Homeboys.

Another obstacle that our participants faced was reconciling with family, specifically their children. "Cindy" a 38-year old Hispanic female shared:

It feels fucked up. It feels messed up because the lifestyle I chose gave me those consequences that my kids are resentful towards me. They don't like me. They dislike me.

Having no family or no supportive family was reported by 29% of our participants who are still struggling to avoid recidivating. After exiting prison "Danielle" a 55 year old Caucasian female shared of having accomplished many goals such as having a nice house, great paying job, but lost everything after having to flee a domestic violence relationship and her job due to an abusive boss. During this same time she had lost her only supportive family member, struggles with a lack of trust to receive any help, and has become disabled due to an auto accident; she explained:

Yeah, most of the things I lost were not related to being incarcerated or using. They were related to domestic violence. You know, it was a relationship where I just had to give up everything I earned to get my freedom back from the particular person. I'm also a victim of sexual…you know a rape victim. Unfortunately, domestic violence more than once…I prostituted myself for drugs, got pregnant a couple of times and I had to get rid of them. I was homeless, I got hepatitis C, I had no one and experience many deaths, losses…I really never wanted to live like this. It's just hard [begins crying]. I have many unresolved issues. I just didn't want anybody in my life because I figured if I let anybody in…they would try to save me or burn me…I ended up living in my car with my dog. It lasted about a month…then I met "Richard." I didn't want to be homeless so I moved in with him. I met him through a trial on Match.com when I was homeless living in my car…He helped me. He knew it was the car or him. I didn't like the choice at first and am still uncomfortable with it, but it's better than living in my car. I don't even want to be with "Richard." I mean he's decent enough, but he can be very disrespectful…

Trauma, Mental Health, & Substance Abuse

A high number of participants shared of experiencing trauma in their lives to include: domestic violence, sexual abuse, childhood rape, murder of family member, death/loss of a family or friend other than murder, and growing up in foster care. A large portion of the participants discussed suffering from depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. In some interviews it appeared that depression and substance abuse were correlated. "Pam" a 41 year old Caucasian female shared:

> I struggled with depression my whole life. Even as a kid I knew something wasn't right. I just didn't feel normal and then I started getting into weed and alcohol real young. Then I was about 20 when I started getting into harder drugs. And when I first started it was like "Wow. This is what I've been missing" because it took away that depression at first. It took away the depression, pain, anxiety; all that. But then it has a way of switching and turning on you.

Meanwhile, with others it appeared that childhood and/or adult trauma correlated with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. For instance, "Karla" a 50 year old African American female shared of her struggles with substance abuse and having served multiple prison terms for possession, sales, and other controlled substances charges. She went on to explain:

> Yes, depression, anxiety from all the trauma I've been through. My Mom had me raped when I was 9 years old. I was curious to know what my Mom was doing when she was having sex with all these different men. They were smoking weed and having sex and I was curious. My Mom turned me into her own private whore. The men who raped me would tell me afterwards that it was my Mom that had me raped. I was also raped after that by a family member. He came in, covered my face, and raped me real bad. I still have bad physical damage down there from it.

Successful Reintegration

In our study, 74% of the participants were reported to have successfully reintegrated back into the community. Successful reintegration appears to be as the result of participants who have gone through programs such as Homeboys Industries, Boise Rescue Mission, Santa Barbara pilot

program, utilized Prison Mentor ministries and/or agencies, and/or are heavily involved in 12

step programs such as Celebrate Recovery, NA, AA, and/or CA, or church.

Others who have successfully reintegrated revealed all having mentors and/or support in

their lives. The theme of mentorship appeared to overlap with support systems/individuals, with

both being indicators of successful reintegration. Those participating in programs (i.e. Homeboys

Industries, Boise Rescue Mission, Santa Barbara pilot program) were given the support,

mentorship and resources needed to successfully reintegrate into the community. "Cynthia" a 41

year old Hispanic shared of the support she received at Homeboys Industries and how the staff

and others in the program were a crucial part of her recovery after a close encounter of

attempting to avenge her brother's murder:

> My brother was everything and he had just did 17 years and then we were both
> indicted on a case together and we were both released within months apart. I got out of
> prison and he got out and I had to go into halfway. And then a year and 7 months after
> he was released they killed him. And I didn't care about anything. I put myself back
> out on the streets. I went into situations. I was hurt; my family was hurt. It was the
> people here who sat with me at night just to make sure that I didn't go back to prison
> [that helped]. But I was still on probation and the cops came and they were like
> "You're going to go to jail for murder if you don't stop." The cops know me very
> well. My PO, he was the one to remind that it was a blessing to be home because I was
> looking at 30 years. I truly didn't care and it was that quick that I was willing to lose
> everything that I had worked for…I could come here [Homeboy's Industries] and just
> sit here all day if I needed to. Or cry if I needed to or just be completely honest. My
> partner is a part of Homeboy's Industries also so I think because he was a part of the
> program before me, and many of the individuals here…who are a great support. But
> just walking through all this stuff together reminded me that we can get through these
> things.

When asked if she came close to reoffending, "Tina" a 44 year old Caucasian female

added:

> Not since getting into the program. But prior to that I kept reoffending when I would
> lose family members. My father died when I was 16. My mother died of a drug
> overdose while I was in the Boise Rescue Mission program. It was a trigger, but I was
> surrounded by people who care and helped me through it. While I was in the program

my Grandmother died and then my sister was diagnosed with brain cancer and died. I had a lot of loss that triggered me while in the program, but was so supported and loved I didn't think of reoffending.

Outside of residential programs, other forms of mentors were observed to be either professionals or nonprofessionals. Professionals included counselors/therapists, case workers, teachers/professors, college counselors, probation/parole officers, and pastors/priests.

After being asked if there was a particular person who helped her overcome obstacles "Madelyn" a 50 year old Biracial female who has completed an MSW program and is now working on her clinical hours shared:

My therapist. Oh my gosh. He's been a big support. He helped me finish graduate school. He's a PsyD. He's amazing.

Nonprofessional mentors came in various forms such as parents, 12 step sponsors, peers, spouses/partners, and prison mentoring volunteers from ministries or agencies. "Amanda" a 31 year old Latina contributed her successful reintegration to the help of both professional mentors, nonprofessional mentors, and support groups:

I would say my group of people at Celebrate Recovery. The ladies in this support group, my sponsor and accountability partners, my therapist, my sponsor and accountability partners, teachers at school. Yeah, and mentors at school who weren't teachers…I also attend CA (Cocaine Anonymous).

"Marsha" a 45 year old Caucasian female concurred with that in her interview, adding:

I attend 12 step meetings such as AA and NA which are spiritual programs.   As I said, spiritual healing is the only way we get better. It's the only solution…My counselor, others in the program…My boyfriend has been a great support and inspiration. He's long time sober. Also, my boss at my first job was in recovery from being a drug dealer, user, and convict. He really helped me by giving me a chance.

In conjunction with having mentors, those who successfully reintegrated revealed having great supportive individuals in their life such as children, family, friends, dogs, and/or a strong

faith in God. "Tybecka" a successful 62 year old Biracial professional with a PhD in Social

Work and strong involvement in her community added:

> Yes, I had a sponsor…but actually, it's all been God. I didn't go into a treatment facility or nothing like that. I just went to a 12 step meeting and did what they said in the 12 step meeting. I got a sponsor and that kinda thing. But I was inspired by just watching people be sober. So it wasn't like one particular person, but it was like many. And mostly I could say to my children because I had spent most of their lives incarcerated. So by this time I got grandchildren so didn't want to be incarcerated and watch my grandchildren grow up from behind bars.

"Coreena" a 38 year old Caucasian female explained:

> My Mom was a big support to me, but…It's all God, Jesus. I ain't gonna lie. I don't sugar coat stuff. I don't believe that people should not say God. Without Him I would be just a shell…you have to believe in the spirit and how much power God has you know. At first, it was just talking to myself I thought. You know what I mean? And finally I got sent to rehab. And now I realize the promise I made was to God. I made a promise that if I got to rehab I'd be a good mom and never touch the stuff [drugs] again. So, later of course I realized if it wasn't for God I'd be dead. If it wasn't for God I'd be crazy. If it wasn't for God, I wouldn't be me.

In conclusion, a portion of participants mentioned dogs being an integral part of their

recovery and in helping them to not recidivate, even giving them a purpose in life. Such as

"Jamie" a Caucasian 62 year old disabled female shared:

> I stay busy taking the dogs out. That helps me a lot too. That gets rid of a lot of my stress. Dogs are just like angels. They just love me no matter what when I have nobody else around…they're always around.

Although "Danielle" previously denied allowing any professional or non-professional

mentors to help her in multiple attempts at recovery, she explains how her dog has kept her from

recidivating or even worse:

> When I got my silly dog I realized the only thing that makes the PTSD better is the dogs…When things are really bad and I'm on the suicide hotline my dog gives me the love...I look over at her. So not only do they pull you out your own stuff because they need you, they pull you out of it with love. Everyday that's my main purpose is to take care of her because they give you the love you don't get from people. They're like little angels. She's my angel.

Discussion

Interestingly, all of the participants interviewed had struggled with various forms of mental health issues throughout their lives. Although extensive probing into past trauma was not conducted, many women openly shared various forms of graphic details of childhood and adult trauma as the reason for their struggles with mental health issues that eventually led to them abusing substances as a coping mechanism. Research by Lynch, DeHart, Belknap, and Green (2012) agrees with these findings and explains that a great percentage of the female prison reentry population have experienced childhood victimization and further trauma as an adult resulting in increased mental health issues and substance abuse disorders.

In *The Body Keeps the Score*, Dr. Van Der Kolk (2014) explains the lengthy journey it takes to recover from trauma (p. 206). This realization needs to be taken into consideration when working with formerly incarcerated women, as this study revealed many have endured traumatic events that eventually led to their initial episode of incarceration and recidivating. He goes on to explain how recovering from trauma is more than just psychotherapy or the telling of a story, but that "the emotions and physical sensations imprinted during the trauma are experienced not as memories but as disruptive physical reactions in the present" (p. 206). This was observed in these interviews as either an obstacles for those who have not been surrounded by mentors and a support system in which they felt safe and cared for, or as a key factor for successful reintegration for those who were mentored and supported in residential programs such as Homeboys Industries, the Boise Rescue Mission, Santa Barbara Pilot program, or for some the all-around support and encouragement they received by immersing themselves in a twelve step program, or church.

From his years of experience working with traumatized individuals, Dr. Van Der Kolk (2014) has learned that people find the greatest healing in the context of relationships either with family, friends, twelve step meetings, religious organizations, or with professionals such as counselors or therapists (p. 212). This study's findings concur with his discovery, as all of the participants who have successfully reintegrated were and/or are surrounded by not just one mentor, but in several along their journeys, and in combination with support systems that also provide safe, healthy relationships for participants to heal and grow. These relationships also modeled for participants new ways of coping with past trauma triggers and tools for overcoming obstacles in the present.

In an interview, Sterling Williams of Free2Succeed (2018) described a new prison mentoring program branched out of AmeriCorps-Vista/Peace Corps based inside the Idaho Department of Corrections that is based off of prison mentoring models used in Scandinavian countries. This program, in collaboration with the Idaho Department of Corrections, works to connect a prisoner with an outside mentor through their case worker in the Department of Corrections. The mentor then begins to meet with their mentees parole or probation officer six months prior to the offender being released. The mentor, parole or probation officer, and supervisor in the Free2Succeed program provide the offender a group of three safe, healthy people, professional and nonprofessional, to work as a solid base before being released and six months to a year after being released from prison (personal communication, March 30, 2018).

He goes on to explain how this model has been shown to reduce recidivism in Scandinavian countries who have the lowest percentage of recidivism in the world. The assigned mentor then meets with the mentee regularly helping them reintegrate into society through shared outings, offering great listening skills and encouragement, and connecting them to

personalized resources such as housing, food, counseling services, programs, churches, twelve step meetings and other support systems; basically anything that each unique mentee needs that are available in their community (Sterling Williams, Free2Succeed, personal communication, March 30, 2018). This program design fits perfectly with the relational support found to be needed for participants in this study who are still struggling and at risk of recidivating.

Because many of the participants experienced childhood victimization and further adult traumas in a relational setting, those working with formerly incarcerated women need an understanding of the dynamics of sexism at play that has caused extreme harm to many of them in their past, and it has the possibility to create triggers and obstacles for them in their future. Many of the women experienced societal oppression due to their gender throughout their lives to include: discrimination in the workplace, domestic violence, and sexual/physical/emotional abuse. This happened either by being influenced and/or taken advantage of by the men or a maternal parent in their lives which led to risky behavior as they acted out or as the consequences of remaining in unhealthy relationships. Formerly incarcerated women may also experience difficulty in developing self-efficacy and autonomy due to being raised in a patriarchal societal system that forces them to conform to traditional gender roles that force women into submission in a relational setting. Opportunities to empower these women is strongly warranted.

Another problematic area of societal oppression found was to be due to stigma and policy. Participants seeking employment and other areas where the need to disclose a criminal background was required has been revealed to be an obstacle. While Ban the Box policy was introduced in 2016 and thought to help offenders as they exit prison by allowing them the option not to disclose their criminal background; thus giving them a chance at employment. It has

actually instigated employers to avoid that question by simply requiring lengthy background

checks for all employees. Further policy changes need to be addressed in order for formerly

incarcerated women to have the opportunity to enter back into the workforce.

Limitations

In this study, three limitations were found to be present. First, the two researchers were a female and a male. The female researcher conducted sixteen interviews where the participants seemed to elaborate more during the interviews than with the male researcher. The male researcher conducted eleven interviews where he had difficulty recruiting participants and needed to prompt the participants to elaborate more on their answers. The participants that were interviewed by the male researcher could have under reported during the interview questioning.

Secondly, due to the Institutional Review Board at California State University, Northridge regulations we could not interview formerly incarcerated women who were currently on probation, parole, and/or being monitored by any other form of authority. Interviewing those women could have possibly given the study new barriers or issues impacting formerly incarcerated women who are reintegrating back into the community.

Finally, this study interviewed women from three different demographic locations to include Los Angeles, Antelope Valley, Santa Barbara, and Boise, Idaho which could have broadened our findings. However, even though the interviews were from different locations, this study still produced similar barriers for our participants. Also, due to the sample size the results cannot be generalized.

Conclusion

While this study theorized that those having a mentor or mentors in their lives after exiting prison reintegrated more successfully, the findings concurred that successful reintegration was found not only in mentors, but also in having safe mentors and a support system that evolves with the formerly incarcerated women's path into a new life as her relational needs change, she begins to heal, and transforms into a new person. With the help of mentors and support systems, these women can perceive a vision of how they would like their life to be, have it modeled for them, and be allowed the opportunity by introduction into their communities to explore and envision a new way of living. Further research could be conducted on mentoring formerly incarcerated men and the specific challenges they may face since prior research has shown that formerly incarcerated women have more relational needs than men during reintegration (Clone & DeHart, 2014, p. 504).

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ADDENDUM-**Formerly Incarcerated Women: Exploring the Benefits of Mentoring in the Reintegration Process** is a joint graduate project between **Marcy Peters #1** and **Raul Perez #2**. This document will explain the division of responsibilities between the two parties. Any additional information can be included in a separate document attached to this Addendum page.

Marcy Peters #1 is responsible for all the following tasks/document sections:

Student #1 was responsible for qualitative data processing (transcription) of some interviews. In addition, Student #1 developed the design of study such as the purpose of the study and research question. Student #1 used a snowball sampling method to recruit participants. Also, Student #1 created the interview questions.

Raul Perez #2 is responsible for all the following tasks/document sections:

Student #2 was responsible for data collection procedures such as demographics, age, and identifying potential participants. Student #2 recruited participants from Homeboys Industry by explaining to the participants the purpose of the study.

Both parties shared responsibilities for the following tasks/document sections:

Both students created the IRB packet by completing each section. Student #1 conducted 16 interviews and Student #2 conducted 11 interviews. Both students compared information and ideas in order to complete the abstract, introduction, literature review, discussion, and conclusion sections of the paper. Both students divided the interviews once transcribed to complete the coding and analyzing to identify themes and patterns. Both students split the cost to use a software to transcribe the 27 interviews.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Marcy Peters #1	Date	**Raul Perez #2**	Date
_____		_____	
Student ID		**Student ID**	
_____	_____	_____	_____
Committee Chair	Date	**Graduate Coordinator**	Date
Dr. Allen Lipscomb			
_____	_____	_____	_____
Committee Member	Date	**Department Chair**	Date
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