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LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
School of Behavioral Health
in conjunction with the
Faculty of Graduate Studies

Reintegration Experiences of Post-Incarcerated Fathers in Southern California

by

Sheldon Smith

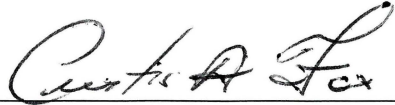
A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of
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Doctor of Philosophy in Family Studies

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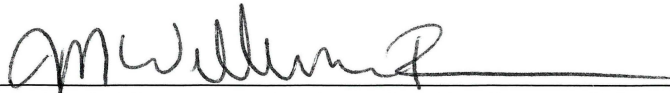
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Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this dissertation in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.



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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Reintegration Experiences of Post-Incarcerated Fathers in Southern California

by

Sheldon Smith

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Family Studies
Loma Linda University, September 2019
Dr. Curtis A. Fox, Chairperson

Abstract

The detention of fathers in penal institutions can challenge their involvement in the lives of their children and this experience can impact these relationships as well as the socio-emotional development of their children in the short and long term. Upon release, the reintegration experiences can be difficult, clumsy, and sometimes lost altogether. This present study explored the experiences of nineteen fathers as they sought to reconnect with their children after incarceration. Through the use of grounded theory and qualitative interviews, three major themes emerged from the data, which provided an explanation of participants' reintegration experiences. These themes were participants' ideology of fatherhood, nodal events, and evolving fatherhood values. When corroborated with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, which was employed as the lens through which participants' experiences could be understood, these themes provided an understanding of the various factors and processes involved in participants' reintegration experiences with their children after incarceration. In effect, participants' experiences could best be theorized as an adaptive iterative process of reintegration, and can function as a basis for ongoing research on post-incarcerated fathers and their children.

Moreover, results of this present study has the potential of informing policy makers, family scientists, government, and families about the processes involved as participants made the transition back into the lives of their children and families, and experienced satisfaction and wellbeing and in so doing, also contributed to the wellbeing of their children. The provisions of policies and infrastructures may serve to facilitate a smoother transition for these men. The present study also offered important implications for theory development, research, and practice.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The rate of incarceration in the United States, as well as the rate at which prisoners are being released from state and federal prisons back into the community has been a serious cause for concern among various stakeholders (MacDonald, 2013; Raphael, 2011; Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Braatz, 2013). Of the approximately 2.3 million prisoners that are incarcerated annually, 700,000 are being released back into the society (Anderson-Facile, 2009). Of this number, 90% are fathers (Trusts, 2010). When fathers become incapacitated because of incarceration, all too often their roles as fathers during this period become dormant. Between periods of being incarcerated and the point of re-entry to society there is a disruption in paternal role, which deem their children as being fatherless.

Over the years, the issue of fatherlessness and the significant roles that fathers play in the lives of their children have been explored and documented extensively by scholars, social scientists, and family life practitioners alike (Blankenhorn, 1995; Carlson, 2006; Cook, 2015; Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Nease & Austin, 2010; Samuel, 2016; Snarey, 1993). In fact, in his four decade study, Snarey (1993) observed that whereas in the past, fathers were perceived as “inconsequential figures in childrearing or background variables in a research,” fathers are now being viewed as “central and primary caregivers” (p. 1) in their children’s lives.

Since fathers play significant roles in the lives of their children, when these roles are disrupted through incarceration, this group, which represents a significant percentage of the prison population, faces a number of challenges at various levels when

transitioning back into parental roles. Some of the daunting challenges that these fathers face include unemployment, literacy and educational attainment, health care and substance abuse challenges, and lack of support from families and communities. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers within the region of Southern California, who sought to reintegrate with their children after incarceration. Although previous studies highlighted the challenges faced by ex-offenders, this study sought to expand as well as to provide an additional vista through which these fathers' experiences can be understood. Through the ecological framework, the researcher sought to gain insights on possible factors within participants' ecosystem, which enhanced or hindered their experiences as they adapted to various facets of their environment whilst reconnecting with their children after incarceration. The researcher utilized two conceptual questions to guide the study. They were as follows:

- a) How do fathers experience reintegration with their children after incarceration?
- b) What are some of the factors that enhance or hinder fathers' experiences of reintegration with their children?

In addition, the grounded theory process demanded the use of three methodological questions. The questions utilized were: What were your experiences with your child (children) like prior to being incarcerated? During your period of incarceration, how did you experience your relationship with your child (children)? Since you've been released, what has your experience with your child (children) been like? These questions were followed up with a set of open-ended questions that captured the

essence of fathers' relationship experiences with their children before, during, and after incarceration.

Background

During the last decade and a half, much scholarship has focused on the reentry experiences of prisoners as they reconnected with their families and societies after being released from penal institutions (Petersilia, 1999, 2001; Pettus-Davis, Scheyett, & Lewis, 2014; Visher, Bakken, & Gunter, 2013; Wheeler & Patterson, 2008; Wright et al., 2013). Some of these studies focused on restrictions and barriers involved in the reentry process (Hoskins, 2014; Trimbur, 2009), consequences of reentry on communities and families (Petersilia, 2001), the risks and needs of the returning prisoner population (Austin & Hardyman, 2004), and the importance of support to prisoners after incarceration (Duwe & Clark, 2012; Spjeldnes, Jung, Maguire, & Yamatani, 2012). An underlying issue, which permeated these studies, was the fact that when prisoners returned to society, they encountered a variety of challenges. These challenges ranged from unemployment to literacy and educational attainment, lack of health care to substance abuse challenges, and the lack of support from families and communities with whom they desired to reconnect (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Miller, Mondesir, Stater, & Schwartz, 2014; Petersilia, 2001).

As post-incarcerated fathers transitioned from prisons to their communities, they are faced with the challenge of gaining meaningful employment (Blessett, 2013; Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). Studies on this particular challenge faced by ex-offenders vary in both theoretical and empirical approaches. On the first account, scholars have advanced the need for an understanding in regard to the stigma attached to

individuals who have a criminal record and the level of perception of warmth exhibited by hiring managers, which has the potential of influencing employers in their decisions to hire ex-offenders (Jones-Young & Powell, 2015). The theoretical model proposed by Jones-Young and Powell (2015) suggested that characteristics in relation to both the ex-offender and the ex-offender's offences, do influence the perception of hiring managers in regard to whether or not they should hire ex-offending job applicants. In another theoretical model which probed the invisible job seeker – notably the ex-offender, Blessett (2013) proposed that because ex-offenders are a stigmatized group, their employment status should be considered within the broader discussions regarding administrative actions and diversity management. In effect, given the linkage between employment and desistance in crime, inclusion of ex-offenders in workplace diversity management should be supported (Blessett, 2013).

Empirical studies also supported anecdotal work. In a study that examined the perceived employability of ex-offenders and the role that the type of offence along with work qualifications played in ex-offenders' employability, Cerda, Stenstrom, and Curtis (2014) found that offender characteristics, skills, and qualities contributed to their employability. Similarly, in an attempt to examine empowerment strategies for the employment of former convicts, Ruskus (2008) distributed 300 questionnaires among various stakeholders such as family members, psychologists, social workers, citizens and employers. The results revealed that the development of independence and empowerment among ex-offenders was necessary because it facilitated the ability of this group to gain meaningful employment as well as it encouraged the development of independent life skills (Ruskus, 2008).

Substance abuse and health issues are additional challenges faced by ex-offenders as they reenter their communities after incarceration. In a report conducted by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), Travis and Waul (2003) observed that the two most significant health challenges facing soon-to-be released prisoners were mental illness and substance abuse. In concurring with Travis and Waul (2003) observation, Petersilia (2001) asserted that among this group, especially when compared to the general population, soon-to-be released prisoners have a considerable amount of medical and mental health challenges. This is explained by their lifestyle which often included high rates of substance abuse use, prior intravenous drug use, and crowded living conditions (Petersilia, 2001).

Other studies have also demonstrated challenges faced by ex-offenders as they reentered their communities. In research that focused on aging prisoners, Maschi and Koskinen (2015) explored the historical roles played by family and the community that helped shape the reunification experiences of older adults released from prison. The findings from staff and former prisoners that were surveyed and interviewed revealed that structural barriers such as homelessness and unemployment posed a challenge to successful reintegration (Maschi & Koskinen, 2015). To meet these needs, one of the recommendations was for transformational community justice to be considered as a medium through which foundational support in the form of food, clothing, housing, guidance and representation be given to this population as they reunify with their families and communities (Maschi & Koskinen, 2015).

If unemployment, health challenges, substance abuse, and support received from communities after incarceration were not daunting enough, ex-offenders also faced

adverse situations in reconnecting with their families after incarceration. This is significant because most fathers who are released are either husbands, or parents and most will attempt to reconnect with partners, former partners, and children subsequent to being released (Petersilia, 2003). One of the obstacles experienced by men as they made this transition a reality, was the challenge of drug use and substance abuse by family members with whom they seek to reconnect. Yahner and colleagues (2010) found that men who returned home had to deal with family members who were using drugs or who were involved in the criminal justice system. Despite high level of support received from family members, approximately 65% of men released from prisons had one or more family member convicted of a crime or dealing with drug and alcohol problems (Yahner, Visser, & La Vigne, 2010). In addition, 32% of these men reported having a family member in prison during the time of their incarceration (Yahner et al., 2010). As a result of the criminogenic lifestyle of family members who for the most part provide some level of support, post-incarcerated fathers are faced with a daunting challenge to successfully reintegrate into parenting roles because exposure to these family members increases the chances of them returning to prison.

Objective and Significance of Study

Although researchers have examined some of the challenges encountered by post-incarcerated men as they reintegrated with their families and communities, fewer studies were found that focused exclusively on the experiences of post-incarcerated fathers who sought reintegration into the lives of their children (Visser et al., 2013; Walker, 2010). Some studies for example, explored the experiences of mothers and children as they

anticipated fathers' reentry (Yocum & Nath, 2011), the role and experiences of fathers before and after incarceration (Geller, 2013; Muth & Walker, 2013; Swisher & Waller, 2008), and fathers' reentry experiences with their daughters after incarceration (Kelly-Trombley, Bartels, & Wieling, 2014a). A significant amount of studies focused on barriers experienced by returning prisoners as they reentered society (Bushway et al., 2007). These barriers included unemployment (Bushway et al., 2007), lack of educational and literacy attainment (J. M. Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2012; Petersilia, 2003), health and substance abuse challenges (Petersilia, 2001; Travis & Waul, 2003), lack of support received from families and communities (Duwe & Clark, 2012; Fox, 2012; Maschi & Koskinen, 2015), among other challenges.

Given that the returning prison population experience various challenges during the reintegration process, it is important to understand these challenges because of the inherent implications for both research and practice. Notwithstanding, it is also important to understand the experiences of fathers given that they play important roles in the lives of their children and represent a significant segment of the returning prison population. The literature reviewed identified a shortage of studies on the experiences of these men. As such, the objective of this study was to examine the various factors that enhanced or hindered the experiences between fathers and their children prior to, during, and after incarceration. Results will fill an important gap in the literature on post-incarcerated fathers in general, and the experiences of this group in particular as they reconnect with their children after incarceration. For the present study, grounded theory was employed because it allowed for the development of a theoretical model and provided an explanation of the phenomenon being explored. Given that post-incarcerated fathers

return and adapt to their communities after being released from prisons, the ecological framework was integrated with grounded theory because the ecological theory is concerned with the interaction and interdependence of human beings as they adapt to various facets of their environment (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993).

This study was significant for two primary reasons. The first notable one was that as post-incarcerated fathers' experiences were explored, stakeholders such as policy makers, communities, and families, were provided with meaningful information that could help in the facilitation of a smoother transition for post-incarcerated fathers in the lives of their children. Previous research fell short in this regard because these studies primarily focused on barriers to prisoner reentry as opposed to the meaning and experiences of particular segments of the returning prisoner population. In this case, fathers. Secondly, as a result of the utilization of grounded theory as the qualitative methodology for the present study, the present research led to the generation of a theoretical model, which helped to explain the experiences of these men as well as provided an opportunity for practitioners to develop efforts that would benefit these men and their children.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Overview

The construction of theories is a fundamental concern for social scientists. As such, when investigating phenomena, it is important to consider the ideas, data, and the relationships that exist among them, which are critical components of resulting theories (White & Klein, 2015). Since research takes place within the realms of data, and theories exist within the realm of ideas, White and Klein (2015) observed that science can only advance to the extent that the resulting “theories and studies are productive and mutually reinforcing” (p. 3). Furthermore, since theory is understood as human construction as opposed to a disembodied set of ideas, theory can be defined as both a process and a product (Boss et al., 1993). Theory should then be understood as both a product and a process in which ideas are systematically formulated and organized so as to understand a particular phenomenon (Boss et al., 1993). The resulting interconnected ideas that emerge from the process is what social scientists refer to as theory (Boss et al., 1993), which serves a number of functions. Among many other things, White and Klein (2015) posited that theories function as a medium through which research findings can be accumulated and organized; they provide precision in clarifying what concepts and relations really mean; they demonstrate the connectedness of ideas; they allow for the interpretation of phenomena being observed; and provide explanations in relation to why and how things happen.

Given the significant functions of theories in the research process, it is important to underscore that they vary in abstraction and scope (Fawcett & Desanto-Madea, 2013). Lower ranged theories are more concrete and include empirical generalizations and casual models, while middle to higher ranged theories are more abstract with the latter being referred to as conceptual framework (Boss et al., 1993). For the present study, the researcher employed the higher ranged theory of the ecological framework, which has concepts and assumptions that are relevant to the phenomenon that was explored. Integrated with the ecological theory, the grounded theory approach to qualitative study was employed with the purpose of generating theories from the themes and categories collected from data on post-incarcerated fathers.

The reintegration experience of fathers into the lives of their children is a complex but yet, dynamic process. As such, researchers in the past have utilized various combinations of theories to understand the father-child relationships. For example, in exploring what constituted successful outcomes for recently released fathers, Visher et al. (2013) utilized context-process-outcome-framework as articulated by Arditti (2012) along with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) development ecological model. According to Visher et al. (2013) this mixed approach to exploring phenomena "allows for salient contextual and family process variables to be identified that have the greatest bearing on fatherhood and reintegrating from prison" (p. 454). Visher and Travis (2003) further observed that different dimensions (or factors) are involved in the transitional and reintegration experiences of individuals returning from prison and reintegrating with the society. These dimensions are not static because they are embedded in the life experience of the returning prisoner and they change over time (Visher & Travis, 2003). This makes an

integration of different approaches necessary. For this reason, this present study employed both the ecological framework, which explored these dimensions; and Charmaz's (2014) grounded theory approach, which explored participants' experiences.

The Ecological Theory

In order to examine the challenges that fathers encountered as they reunified with their children, the ecological theory was an appropriate framework to employ because it provided the researcher with the understanding of how human beings adapted and related to their environments. The ecological theory has its roots in human ecology which is concerned with the interaction and interdependence of humans (as individuals, groups, and societies) with the environment (Boss et al., 1993, p. 421). A key process that is involved is the adaptation by humans to their environments. Survival, quality of life, and conservation of the environment including the sustained yield of natural resources, depend on the ways and means by which humans achieve adaptation (Boss et al., 1993).

Moreover, the ecological theory has several underlying concepts and assumptions, which closely align with the concepts and assumptions of this present research. These provided a framework from which the family could be better understood. Of such, one of the first concept that pervades the theory is that when the family interacts with its environment, it constitutes what is known as an ecosystem (Boss et al., 1993). Within the ecosystem, the whole consists of parts and the relationship that exists therein is one of interdependence. Notwithstanding, it should be noted that despite the interdependence that exists between the whole and parts, each ecosystem has a set of characteristics that separates it as a whole (White & Klein, 2015).

Important to understanding the ecological theory is also the concept of ontogenetic development. This has to do with changes that occur within a unit or an organism's internal structure (White & Klein, 2015). Internal biological change resulting from organization and dependencies of parts is called development. An example is aging. On the social or external aspect, individuals also develop. This developmental experience as purported by White and Klein (2015) is what can be classified as maturation or experience.

Similarly, the concept of adaptation is also significant in understanding the ecological theory. In that, adaptation is linked to the idea of "survival" and has to do with how individuals adapt to, or respond to change (White & Klein, 2015). Within the concept of adaptation is the idea of adaptive range which is a niche occupied by an organism within an ecosystem (White & Klein, 2015). It is significant to note that despite the ontogenetic development of an individual which determines the range of behavior by the individual, an individual or organism cannot adapt outside of its range (White & Klein, 2015).

Of all the concepts that characterize the ecological theory, the one that demanded much attention especially in regard to this present study had to do with the ecological levels. Within this concept, Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that the family is one among many "nested" ecosystems in which the individual developed and interacted. Bronfenbrenner (1979) understood the individual's environment as one, which consisted of a "set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls." He further posited that there are four levels of environmental systems. These levels are differentiated

on the basis of their immediacy with respect to the developing person. They are the micro, meso, exo, macro and the chrono systems.

The microsystem is the innermost level of the environment, which consists of activities and patterns in the person's immediate surroundings (Berk, 2008). At this level, Bronfenbrenner emphasized that in order to understand development; one should keep in mind that all relationships are *bidirectional*. Thus, in this case, the father's pre and post incarcerated behaviors affect the child or children's behavior; and likewise, the child's biological and socially influenced characteristics such as their physical attributes and personalities, affect the father's behavior. It should also be noted that at this level, other individuals within the microsystem such as the child's mother or other extended family members, affect the quality of the relationship between the child and his father. Consequently, if individuals within the microsystem are supportive to the relationship between the father and child, then the relationship is enhanced. The opposite also holds true.

The second level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is also relevant in understanding the process involved in the reintegration of fathers into their children's lives. This level is called the mesosystem which encompasses connections between microsystems (Berk, 2008). Bornstein (2002) observes that at this level, a child's academic progress depends not just on activities that take place in classrooms but also parents' involvement in school life and on the extent to which academic learning is carried out in the home. At this level, it is important for meaningful relationships to be developed between microsystems. This is necessary to the extent that with appropriate structures in place, post-incarcerated fathers can be better positioned to develop

meaningful relationship with their children so that they in turn can experience better outcomes. This augurs well for their children's success at the meso level.

At the third level is the exosystem, which is made up of social settings that do not contain the developing person but nevertheless affect experiences in immediate settings (Berk, 2008). Examples include formal organizations such as workplace and community, health and welfare services. There is also an informal component, which includes social networks such as friends, and extended family members who provide advice, companionship, and even financial assistance.

The outermost level of Bronfenbrenner's model is the macrosystem, which is not a specific context. Notwithstanding, it consists of cultural values, laws, customs, and resources, which affect the family system. Berk (2008) observes that the priority that the macrosystem gives to the needs of children and adults affects the support received at inner levels of the environment. Examples at this level might include policies established by government, which ensure that incarcerated fathers are educated prior to re-entry into society with the necessary skills to adequately adapt to their environment subsequent to their release.

The final dimension of the ecological theory that has significance on the phenomenon being explored is an addition made by Bronfenbrenner to his 1979 ecological model. This dimension is called the chronosystem. The chronosystem "encompasses change or consistency over time" in both the characteristics of a person, and in the environment in which that person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The implication of the chronosystem on the individual suggests that as the individual goes through the life course, various changes occur throughout time, which impacts the

individual personally, and also his relationship with others. For post-incarcerated fathers, this is significant because changes would have occurred between the various ecosystems before, during, and after incarceration that would have significant impact on how he reconnects with his child (children) after incarceration.

Assumptions of the Ecological Theory

The ecological theory also has a number of assumptions, which separates it from other theories. The first notable assumption is that of interdependence. By interdependence, the family has been observed as a part of the total life system and is interdependent with both the living and non-living aspects of its environment (Boss et al., 1993). In light of this fact, the properties of the family and the environment along with the structure of the environmental settings and the processes taking place within and between them, must be viewed and analyzed as such (Boss et al., 1993).

The adaptive nature of family systems is another assumption that has significant bearing on the ecological theory. In that, families should be viewed as semi-open, goal directed, dynamic, adaptive systems (Boss et al., 1993, p. 426). Consequently, each member of the family grows and adapts through interchanges with its immediate ecosystem and more distance environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Boss et al. (1993) the process of adaptation is one that should be viewed as continuous in family ecosystems.

Similarly, how the family interacts with the environment is also another significant assumption, which undergirds the ecological theory. An understanding of this assumption is necessary since during the process of adapting to various ecosystems, the

family is interacting with multiple environments. With this interaction, all facets of the environment should be viewed as being interrelated and influential to each other. Thus, the natural environment acts as a reservoir of resources for all life, while human and socio-cultural environment have influences on how the natural environment is being treated and vice versa (Boss et al., 1993).

In order for families to survive, they need energy for maintenance and survival. Consequently, the ecological theory assumes that families are transformative energy systems that utilize energy for interaction with other systems and also for creative and adaptive functioning (Boss et al., 1993). Furthermore, the information within the family system is what organizes, activates, and transforms matter-energy in the family ecosystem (Boss et al., 1993, p. 426).

Finally, as families navigate through various ecosystems, it should be underscored that families have varying degrees of freedom and control with respect to interacting with their environments (Boss et al., 1993). Boss et al. (1993) observed that the central control process in families that directs family members in attaining individual and family goals is decision making. When decisions and actions are carried out in the family, they have an impact on the culture, society, and the natural environment (Boss et al., 1993, p. 426).

Ecological Factors Affecting Reintegration

As fathers prepare to reintegrate with their children subsequent to being released from prison, Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological model presents an ideal framework through which these experiences could be understood. Fathers exist in environments, which are dynamic to the extent that there are a variety of environmental factors that

ought to be considered when exploring this phenomenon. Consequently, it was necessary to explore the five levels of the ecological system and to see how the various environmental factors enhanced or hindered the reintegration experiences of post-incarcerated fathers with their children. The five levels proposed by Bronfenbrenner were the micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono systems.

At the innermost part of Bronfenbrenner's model, is the microsystem where the father exists and interacts with himself and his surroundings. As was observed by Visher and Travis (2003) in their study on transitions from prison to community, it was highlighted that individuals returning home from prison have been shaped by a number of factors including their offending and substance-abuse histories, their work skills and job histories, their mental and physical health, their prison experiences, their attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits. Furthermore, studies have been done on former prisoners with the aim of examining the impact of prison experiences on post release outcomes. These studies included the length of time spent in prison, the prisoner's involvement in correctional program of various types, and the psychological consequences of the prison experience. The results from these studies suggested that long periods of confinement reduced an individual's ties to family and friends, diminish job skills, and decrease post release employment prospect (Lynch & Sabol, 2001; Western, Kling , & Weiman, 2001). Since at the micro level relationships are bidirectional, meaning anything that happens within the father's experience and surroundings ultimately affect his relationship with his child, it is critical for incarcerated fathers to get the necessary support so that they can connect with their children in positive ways post their incarceration.

The next layer within Bronfenbrenner's ecological system, which has the potential of helping fathers to make the transition from prison and consequently reconnecting with their children a success, is the mesosystem. The mesosystem encompasses connections between various microsystems. One such connection is that of the immediate family. Research has found that while in prison and upon release, fatherhood is facilitated by networks of support such as partners, mothers, siblings, and other family members (Walker, 2010). Support ranged from emotional support to housing assistance, as well as family acceptance, encouragement and perceived emotional support (Visher & Travis, 2003). Based on the level of support received from family members and close friends, incarcerated fathers can experience post-release success, which helps them to better negotiate relationships with their children.

In addition to support received from families and close friends, the exosystem or the environment in which incarcerated fathers will be reintegrated into also plays a vital role in facilitating a successful return. The exosystem as presented in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model includes employment organizations, community health services, friends and neighbors, and extended families. In order for incarcerated fathers to make the transition from prison to the community successfully, a variety of neighborhood indicators and resources may affect the post-release outcomes. These include housing values and availability, job availability and proximity of jobs, health care services, and substance abuse treatment (Haines, 1990; Harm & Phillips, 2001; Ritchie, 2001; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Furthermore, social and structural features of the environment in which fathers will be reintegrated might also affect post release outcomes that are critical to a successful transition from prison (Visher & Travis, 2003). Some of these

include finding and holding a job, avoiding the use of alcohol and illegal drugs, finding affordable housing, and receiving physical and mental care. Thus, it should be understood that with proper social and structural features in place, fathers are in a better position to make the transition to community and consequently the connection with children a positive reality.

Apart from the meso, micro, and exo systems that have the potential of enhancing the father's transitional process from prison to society, and ultimately to reassuming paternal roles, it is useful to explore the macro system, which is the outermost part of the ecological system. At this level, cultural values, laws, customs, and resources are considered which in some way or form affect how returning fathers function in society as they interact with and adapt to their environments. At the macro level, successful reentry to society by fathers is mostly determined by policies that have been put in place by the government. This is due to the fact that policies, as observed by Visser and Travis (2003) determines who goes to prison, what happens to prisoners while they are in prison, and the level of support and supervision for ex-prisoners following their release from prison.

Policies are important and have important significance for fathers prior to entry into prisons, and their reentry into society. For example, as a father prepares for reentry into society, different states might implement different policies through the form of programs so that prisoners can reintegrate well. Some of these programs may include vocational training, drug rehabilitation programs, and other educational programs. Policy might dictate a variety of stipulations including the father being an active participant in programs as a prerequisite to being released into society. Additionally, policy can also

affect mandatory post-release programs that fathers are required to attend. The long-term effect of these policies is to reduce recidivism and to ultimately reconnect fathers with their children and society. All in all, it is clear that policies have a significant impact on how incarcerated fathers are being prepared during and after incarceration so that they can have a successful reintegration with their communities and families.

The chronosystem, which is a later dimension that was added to Bronfenbrenner (1979) model, is also crucial in understanding the experiences of post-incarcerated fathers. The chrono system has to do with changes or consistency in both the characteristics of individuals as well as their environments over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Since post-incarcerated fathers experience various challenges during the reintegration process, navigating these challenges over time necessitates adaptation and changes, which in turn affects them on both personal and environmental levels. As such, changes in their health, education, employment statuses, family structures, and residencies are important when considering this dimension of the ecological theory. Consequently, an understanding of the changes or consistencies that occur in the lives of post-incarcerated fathers is necessary because it provides additional insights into how fathers navigate the challenges they experience as they reintegrate with their children after incarceration.

Suffice it to say, the ecological model as posited by Bronfenbrenner, provides a valuable framework through which family scientists and other interested groups can understand the processes involved in the reintegration of fathers in the lives of their children and society. Furthermore, the framework provides a viable lens through which one can explore some of the factors that mitigate the re-integration of fathers as they

reconnect with their children after incarceration. Since successful reentry experiences have the promise of reducing fiscal strain, societal costs, and other consequences associated with incarceration that weigh on the individual, family, community and government, Kiczkowski (n.d.); Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model provides a clear understanding of some of the possible factors involved in post-incarcerated fathers' reentry experiences. Furthermore, because incarcerated fathers do not live in isolation and they have to adapt to their environment after incarceration, the ecological model supports the importance of how an understanding of the different factors in the environment can facilitate the smooth transition of incarcerated fathers' return to society.

In summary, it is a fact that as post-incarcerated fathers transition from prison to society and ultimately reassuming parental roles, they encounter myriads of challenges. Some of the challenges they encounter include lack of employment, literacy and educational challenges, health and substance abuse challenges. In addition, they also encounter lack of support from both their families and the communities in which they return subsequent to being released from correctional facilities. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, which posits adaptation at various levels of the ecological system, provides a useful framework through which the process of reintegration and transitioning of post-incarcerated fathers into parenting roles can be understood. Understanding the various levels and dimensions of the ecological framework provides a meaningful vista through which the challenges experienced by post-incarcerated fathers can be understood; and the necessary support given to post-incarcerated fathers as they make the transition to parenting roles.

As will be seen later, this present study utilized environments and adaptation as

important variables in understanding this phenomenon. In this case, environment refers to the various settings or systems such as families, communities, and policies that post-incarcerated fathers have to navigate and interact with so that their reintegration experiences with their children becomes a successful reality. Adaptation refers to the dynamic roles that post-incarcerated fathers have to play as interchange is made with both their immediate, as well as distant environments. In effect, this understanding can better inform and equip family life practitioners and policymakers with tools to assist families and communities as they facilitate the reintegration experiences of post-incarcerated fathers.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Over the last decade and a half, much research has been done on the reentry experiences of ex-offenders. Scholarship has focused on restrictions and barriers involved in the reentry process (Hoskins, 2014; Trimbur, 2009), consequences of reentry on communities and families (Petersilia, 2001), the risks and needs of the returning prisoner population (Austin & Hardyman, 2004), and the importance of support to prisoners after incarceration (Duwe & Clark, 2012; Spjeldnes et al., 2012). An underlying issue, which permeated these studies, was the fact that when prisoners returned to society, they encountered a variety of challenges. These challenges ranged from unemployment to literacy and educational attainment, lack of health care to substance abuse challenges, and the lack of support from families and communities in which ex-offenders sought to reintegrate (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Miller et al., 2014; Petersilia, 2001).

In light of the outlined challenges experienced by ex-offenders, most of the studies reviewed tended to be general in scope, with little or no focus on fathers, which make up a significant proportion of the returning prison population (Trusts, 2010). As noted previously, fathers do play significant roles in the lives of their children and any disruption in paternal roles can have serious consequences on children. This necessitated the present study, which aimed to understand the experiences of fathers as they sought reintegration with their children after incarceration.

In previous studies, scholarship tended to be deficient in providing a qualitative

approach that utilized grounded theory as its methodology, while integrating the ecological framework as the lens through which post-incarcerated fathers' experiences could be understood. This study focused on the experiences of post-incarcerated fathers as they transitioned from prison and sought reintegration with their children. Exploring this phenomenon was significant because the majority of ex-offenders are fathers who sought to reconnect with their families after incarceration (Austin & Hardyman, 2004; Trusts, 2010; Visher et al., 2013). Furthermore, the literature reviewed indicated that as post-incarcerated fathers sought reintegration, they encountered many challenges, which warranted the attention of policy makers and family life practitioners (Austin & Hardyman, 2004; Jones-Young & Powell, 2015; Miller et al., 2014; Raphael, 2011). These challenges included unemployment, literacy and educational attainment, health and substance abuse challenges, and little or no support from the communities and families in which they will reenter.

Unemployment

For post-incarcerated fathers, unemployment is a significant challenge because the ability to find and maintain a job subsequent to being released, reduced the likelihood of committing crimes and becoming a reoffender (Bushway et al., 2007). Furthermore, for fathers who desired to resume paternal responsibilities, which included taking care of their children's financial needs, the challenge of navigating the job market became complex for a variety of reasons. Two of these included their degree of employability, and employers' unwillingness to hire.

The ability to gain meaningful employment from a prospective employer had a lot

to do with the degree of employability of post-incarcerated fathers. Employability as articulated by Robinson (2000), is the ability to obtain, maintain, and perform well on a job. Cerda et al. (2014) observed that employability comprised basic skills, which included reading, writing, and computational skills; thinking skills, which included the ability to learn new tasks, follow instructions, and reason; and personal qualities, which included honesty, punctuality, and the ability to show respect for others. More often than not, post-incarcerated fathers failed to meet these expectations from prospective employers, and as a result, lose out on the opportunity to be gainfully employed.

Secondly, as post-incarcerated fathers pursued employment through the job market, they were also faced with the challenge of the unwillingness of employers to hire. In their collective work on barriers to reentry, Bushway et al. (2007) observed that having failed to accumulate additional work experience while being incarcerated, the prospect of being employed became unlikely due to the fact that prospective employers risked depreciating their workers' value by employing previously incarcerated workers. Additionally, for employers who were in businesses that required frequent customer contact, employers tended to be reluctant to employ former inmates due to a perception that customers might be victimized, which would result in employers being exposed to legal liability (Bushway et al., 2007). Thus, with the lack of employability skills and the unwillingness of employers to hire former inmates, post-incarcerated fathers are financially challenged when making the transition to parental roles.

Literacy and Educational Attainment

Whereas finding employment was identified as an obstacle for post-incarcerated

fathers, what made their reintegration experiences even more difficult, was their level of literacy and educational attainment (Petersilia, 2003). In a recent 5-year follow-up study conducted in Indiana, J. M. Nally et al. (2012) found that post-released prisoners with higher levels of education as opposed to those who had little or no education, were less likely to become recidivist offenders. Furthermore, the 5-year follow-up study revealed that racial disparity existed amongst recidivists such that approximately 70 percent were African American males who had no high school credentials, whilst their European American male counterparts had a recidivism rate of approximately 64% (J. M. Nally et al., 2012). Indeed, this finding was consistent with previous findings, which suggested that there was an inverse relationship between recidivism and education to the extent that individuals with higher education levels would have a lower chance of being re-arrested (Petersilia, 2003). Considering the number of fathers being released yearly, the desire to reconnect with their children subsequent to being released becomes challenging because fathers' level of literacy and educational attainment is intricately related to their ability to find meaningful jobs to take care of their children.

Health and Substance Abuse

Apart from barriers posed by employment and educational challenges, post-incarcerated fathers are also faced with the challenge of overcoming substance abuse and other health issues. In a report conducted by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), Travis and Waul (2003) observed that the two most significant health challenges that faced soon to be released prisoners were mental illness and substance abuse. In concurring with Travis and Waul (2003) observation, Petersilia

(2001) asserted that among this group, especially when compared to the general population, soon to be released prisoners had a considerable amount of medical and mental health challenges. This is explained by their lifestyle which often included high rates of substance abuse use, prior intravenous drug use, and crowded living conditions (Petersilia, 2001). To compound the situation even further, when this group is released into society, they had limited or no access to healthcare which increased the risk of diseases being spread such as HIV, hepatitis, and tuberculosis (Petersilia, 2001). Consequently, since their health is a major challenge when making the transition back to society, their reintegration with their children is also inhibited because of their health and substance abuse challenges.

Community Support

Integral to the successful transition of post-incarcerated fathers from prisons to their communities, is the level of support received from the communities in which they are being reintegrated into. In a study which focused on aging prisoners who returned to their communities, Maschi and Koskinen (2015) explored the perspectives on the historical roles played by family and the community that helped to shape the reunification experiences of older adults released from prison. The findings from staff and former prisoners that were surveyed and interviewed revealed that structural barriers such as homelessness and unemployment posed a challenge to successful reintegration (Maschi & Koskinen, 2015). To meet these needs, one of the recommendations from the findings suggested that transformational community justice should be considered as a medium through which foundational support in the form of food, clothing, housing, guidance and

representation should be given to this population as they pursued reunification with their families and communities (Maschi & Koskinen, 2015).

In another study which examined the supportive and restorative role that communities should play in prisoner reentry, Fox (2012) observed that reintegrative reentry faced a challenge because of the punitive turn among citizens. If this stance that citizens took, along with the fears about the risks involved in helping ex-offenders is suspended, communities should then apply the principle of restorative justice whereby they owned and managed their crime problems whilst helping ex-offenders in the process of reintegration (Fox, 2012). Furthermore, if communities are going to facilitate the process of successful reintegration, a number of community organizations should be accessible to offenders during this critical transition. This was observed by Wallace (2015) who found that gains in emergency assistance organizations, increased recidivism rates in affluent neighborhoods because they attracted unwanted individuals into the community. Similarly, losses in organizations particularly educational ones had the tendency to deny ex-offenders the opportunity to high school diplomas as well as to train for employment. Consequently, these losses in employment organizations had a trickledown effect on recidivism (Wallace, 2015). These challenges, which exist within communities that prisoners reentered, do not augur well for fathers who desired reintegration with their children after being released from prison.

Familial Support

The level of support given by families to post-incarcerated fathers also has the potential of impacting their experiences as they make the transition from prison to

parenting roles. This was found to be significant because most fathers who are released are either husbands, or parents and most will attempt to reconnect with partners, former partners, and children subsequent to being released (Petersilia, 2003). One of the challenges experienced by men as they aimed to make this transition a reality, is the challenge of drug use and substance abuse by family members they reconnected with. In a study conducted by Yahner et al. (2010), it was discovered that men who returned home had to deal with family members who were using drugs or who were involved in the criminal justice system. Despite high level of support received from family members, it was observed that approximately 65% of men released from prisons had one or more family member who was convicted of a crime and had drug or alcohol problems (Yahner et al., 2010). In addition, 32% of these men reported having a family member in prison during the time of their incarceration (Yahner et al., 2010). As a result of the criminogenic lifestyle of family members who for the most part provide some level of support to ex-offenders, post-incarcerated fathers are faced with a daunting challenge to successfully reintegrate with their children because exposure to these family members increases the chances of them returning to prison.

Despite the challenges posed by some family members in making the post-incarceration experience a successful reality, it is significant to note that other non-criminogenic family members and friends can aide the post-incarcerated father to make a successful transition back into the lives of their children. This support has to begin during the period of incarceration. In a quantitative study conducted among 16,420 offenders in Minnesota prisons, Duwe and Clark (2012) analyzed the effects of visitation on recidivism. The findings revealed that visits from friends and family in general helped to

improve offenders in making the transition from prison to the community (Duwe & Clark, 2012). Additionally, Duwe and Clark (2012) observed that while visits from more significant persons such as mothers, spouses and children had less impact, the visit received from fathers, siblings, in-laws, and clergy were the most important in reducing recidivism. In effect, the results indicated that the more sources of social support an offender had, the lower the risk of recidivism (Duwe & Clark, 2012).

Gender specific studies have also been done with daughters of previously incarcerated fathers (Kelly-Trombley, Bartels, & Wieling, 2014b; Muth & Walker, 2013). From these studies, Kelly-Trombley et al. (2014b) found among many other things that fathers who were previously incarcerated, re-evaluated decision-making about whether to contact their daughter during incarceration and reentry. During the process, they identified themselves as their daughters' protectors, and experienced both optimism and apprehension during the reentry process. Muth and Walker (2013) also found hope for a father anticipating reentry through a daughter's declaration of her unwavering support and connection to him. All in all, these findings suggested that with much support from families and friends during and after incarceration, the challenges encountered while reintegrating with children after release from penal institutions would be minimized.

Summary of the Literature

Post-incarcerated fathers represent a significant percentage of the returning prison population. As fathers seek to reintegrate with their children after incarceration, they encounter various challenges. Scholarship on the challenges encountered by the returning

prison population is very extant. Some of the challenges faced by this group included unemployment, lack of education, inadequate health care, substance abuse challenges, and lack of support from families and communities.

Although research has been done on the returning prison population within the last decade or so, most of these studies focused on the challenges experienced by ex-offenders, rates of recidivism among this group, and the support needed at various levels to reduce recidivism rates. These studies were mostly quantitative in nature and as such failed to take into account the lived experiences of the returning prison population. Furthermore, fewer studies focused on the reentry experiences of a significant proportion (90%) of the returning prison population – fathers.

Present Study

Since fathers play significant roles in the lives of their children, understanding their relationship experiences with their children during various transitions is one that is important to explore. As such, the aim of this study was to examine the various factors that enhanced or hindered the relationship experiences between fathers and their children prior to, during, and after incarceration. The present study will fill an important gap in the literature on post-incarcerated fathers in general, and the experiences of this group in particular as they reconnected with their children after incarceration. Through interviews with participants, the researcher sought to explore and understand the deeper meanings, experiences, and contexts of this group as they transitioned from prison to parenting roles.

In order to understand the experiences of these men, the following questions were

used to guide the research process. What were your experiences with your child (children) like prior to being incarcerated? During your period of incarceration, how did you experience your relationship with your child (children)? Since you've been released, what has your experience with your child (children) been like? The resulting responses will allow for the development of concepts and theories, which will add to the existing body of knowledge on post-incarcerated fathers.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In researching and studying social phenomena, researchers generally take various approaches. The three notable ones utilized by social scientists, family life practitioners, and other social science scholars alike are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The type of approach utilized by researchers to study a particular phenomenon depends on a number of considerations. These include the philosophical assumptions held by the researcher, the procedures of enquiry also known as the research design, and the specific method of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2014).

This present study explored the experiences of previously incarcerated fathers as they sought to reintegrate with their children after incarceration. The study utilized a qualitative design as the method of approach for understanding this phenomenon. This approach to scientific inquiry, made both the researcher and participant actively involved in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Throughout the research process, the researcher was able to explore and understand the deeper meanings ascribed by participants to their reintegration experiences (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the risk of the interviewer influencing the research process through background information was minimized because participants participated in a more democratic way by directing the flow of the conversation (Davies & Hughes, 2014). Additionally, as questions emerged during the data collection process, data were built inductively from particulars to general themes (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, in contrast to quantitative data, which involve numerical interpretation and analysis, the qualitative

design of the present study allowed for rich theoretical observations, which were generated from data and could not be easily reduced to numbers (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Suffice it to say, the qualitative research design provided illumination into the social world of which quantitative research could not (Grauerholz, 2012).

Grounded Theory

The present study utilized a grounded theory approach. In its simplest form, grounded theory can be defined as a set of flexible and consistent guidelines through which qualitative data can be collected and analyzed so as to construct theories that are ‘grounded’ in the data that have been collected (Charmaz, 2006). This approach to qualitative inquiry emerged during the 1960s through the collaboration of two notable sociologists, Glaser and Strauss (1967) who felt that theories used for study among participants were inappropriate (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2007; Smith, 2008). Thus, through the practice of grounded theory, it was discovered that theories could emerge through the observation and analysis of patterns, themes, and categories discovered in the data (Babbie, 2013).

Since grounded theory has a rich history in qualitative studies, this methodology was employed for exploring the present study. Specifically, Charmaz’s (2014) ‘constructivist’ approach to grounded theory was utilized because it acknowledges researcher’s subjectivity, involvement, construction and interpretation of the data collected and the phenomenon being explored. Three reasons which substantiated the use of grounded theory, were the theory’s assumptions and concepts, its components and characteristics, as well as its data analysis process.

Since grounded theory can be traced back to symbolic interactionism, the rich history of its assumptions and concepts is useful in understanding qualitative phenomena. Some of these concepts as observed by Daly (2007) include: the self being a social product which can be understood through the process of role taking; the fact that human beings are born into a world where interaction and communication is done through shared symbols; that language is a medium through which human beings interact and understand each other which makes life meaningful; that social reality is complex whilst changing and yet subject to unfolding realities; and that social life is a process that continues to emerge (Daly, 2007). For this researcher, the dynamic nature of these theoretical assumptions set grounded theory apart from other qualitative approaches in studying this phenomenon.

Apart from the rich historical use of the assumptions and concepts of grounded theory, the components and characteristics of grounded theory practice also sets it apart from other methodological approaches (Charmaz, 2006; Smith, 2008). These include the simultaneous involvement of the researcher in data collection and analysis, the construction of analytic codes and categories from data, the utilization of the constant comparative method, the advancement of theory development during data collection and analysis, memo-writing, sampling, and the conducting of literature review (Charmaz, 2006; Smith, 2008). Furthermore, what makes grounded theory even more unique when compared to other approaches, is the fact that rather than utilizing concepts prior to the beginning of any research, concepts are generated from data collection during the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). From these concepts, theories are derived, which is what gives grounded theory its name. Additionally, with the interrelatedness of

data collection and the research analysis processes, there is much back and forth between data collection and analysis such that concepts are continually emerging from previous data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). For the present study, this allowed for flexibility on the researcher's part whilst the researcher remained open to new discoveries as different concepts emerged.

The data analysis process was also another significant reason why grounded theory was the methodology of choice for this present study. This process is called constant comparison or the comparative method (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Through the use of the constant comparison method, the researcher was able to break down data into manageable units (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During the process, data were compared with data so that similarities or difference could be identified (Charmaz, 2014). The data that were found to be similar were grouped together under concepts which were further categorized or thematized. Eventually, the categorized data were integrated around core categories which provided structures for ensuing theories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), which can be further utilized by researchers and policymakers for ongoing research and development of programs and implementation of policies.

Epistemological Assumption and Research Paradigm

In order to understand the fundamental question of science in acquiring knowledge about particular realities, it is important for researchers to approach studies with an epistemological assumption. For the present study, the researcher chose to take the subjectivist position. This allowed for the construction of knowledge through through

meaning making process since there was no separation between the knower and what was known (Daly, 2007). Objectivity was negated because the researcher played the role of shaping the direction and results of the study. Since the research process involved the values, preferences, and understandings of the researcher, bias was involved (which is addressed in researcher's subjectivity) (Daly, 2007). In contrast to the objectivist assumption which stresses accuracy and certainty, the subjectivist position values research outcome as one which is subjected to varying viewpoints, interpretations, explanations, and revisions based on changing circumstances (Daly, 2007).

The paradigm that undergirded this study was social constructionism. Within the realm of social constructionism, reality and interpretation are constructed and understood based on the interplay between an internally and externally subjective meaning-making process between researcher and participants (Daly, 2007, p. 32). As such, both researcher and participants engaged in the research process with shared understanding of symbols, language, behavior, and other activities.

Critical to understanding the meaning-making process of participants, habits and tools were essential elements utilized by the researcher. For the social constructionist, the primary habit that is utilized is talk, which might could be in the form of interviews, observations, or focus groups (Daly, 2007). Tools are also important features. Daly (2007) observed that the primary tools social constructionists employ are observation, narratives, and interviews. For this project, the researcher utilized talk and in-depth interviews. This provided an understanding of the meaning given to the realities experienced by post-incarcerated fathers.

Participants

This grounded theory study utilized a purposive sampling strategy. During the process, 19 participants (as seen in Table 1 below and APPENDIX C) from various organizations and regions within Southern California were recruited. The institutions from which participants were recruited ranged from universities to faith-based, reentry to gang intervention, and community agencies to family life organizations. The ethnic background of participants reflected the proportion of ethnic groups incarcerated in Southern California, as well as the geographic location of participants. For this study, 10 participants identified as African Americans (AA), 4 identified as Latino Americans (LA), 2 as Native Americans (NA), 2 as European Americans (EA), and 1 participant identified as Multi-racial (MR). Participants' ages ranged from a low of 33 to 63 years of age with an average age of 47.

Table 1. Demographics of Study Participant

Pseudonym * (N=19)	Age	Race or Ethnicity	Level of Education	Marital Status	Religious Preference	Number of Children	Number of Mothers
Payton	34	European American	Some College	Married	Christian	2	1
Oliver	56	African American	High School	Married	Christian	5	5
Gordon	53	African American	Some College	Married	Christian	3	1
Fred	46	African American	Less than High School	Married	Christian	20	6
Eddy	44	Latino American	Some College	Married	Christian	4	3
Andre	39	Native American	Greater than Associate	Single	Muslim	4	1
Lovelle	54	African American	Associate	Divorced	Christian	2	2
Don	44	African American	Some College	Divorced	Christian	4	4
Victor	33	Latino American	Some College	Married	Christian	1	1
Randy	53	African American	Masters	Married	Christian	8	5
Blake	63	African American	Associate	Divorced	Christian	2	1
Keith	58	European American	Masters	Engaged	Spiritual	1	1
Ralph	47	Native American	Masters	Divorced	Christian	2	1
Andrew	55	African American	Bachelors	Married	Christian	5	1
Beau	53	African American	Some College	Married	Christian	4	1
Solomon	48	African American	Some College	Cohabiting	Christian	7	4
Greg	39	Latino American	High School	Divorced	Christian	2	1
Justin	38	Multi- Racial	Less than High School	Cohabiting	Spiritual	3	3
Rupert	43	Latino American	Some College	Divorced	Christian	6	4

*Names represented in the sample are pseudonyms assigned to participants in the study.

With the exception of two participants, who had less than high school education, most fathers completed high school and had some level of college education (SC). Three participants shared that they had acquired master's degrees (MA). In regard to their current partners, nine (9) participants disclosed that they were presently married, six (6) indicated that they were divorced, three (3) disclosed that they were presently cohabiting, while one (1) participant said that he was single. On average, participants had four children with their partners, with a minimum of 1 child and a maximum of 20 children born to a maximum of 6 mothers.

Apart from one (1) participant who identified as a Muslim and two (2) who identified as being spiritual, the majority of participants in the study identified as Christians. Even though some participants had previous incarcerations, participants interviewed for this study spent a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 14 years with no break in prison term. Fifteen participants disclosed that their crimes included shoplifting, burglary, theft, possession of illegal firearm, carjacking, fraud, tax evasion, and driving under the influence (DUI). The other four participants refrained from disclosing the reasons for their incarceration. Further demographic details of participants can be found on APPENDIX C.

Inclusion Criteria and Screening Procedures

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of previously incarcerated fathers as they reconnected with their children after incarceration. In order to participate in this study, participants had to fulfill a number of criteria. The required criteria were as follows:

- a) Participants should be a previously incarcerated biological father aged 25-70 living in Southern California.
- b) Participants should have spent at least 2 years, and a maximum of 15 years in a penal institution.
- c) Participants should have had a child or children aged 3 years or older prior to incarceration, and no older than 18 years after release.
- d) Prospective participants should have provided some level of financial support to children prior to being incarcerated.
- e) Participants would have had to be released after serving a minimum of 2 years with no rearrests within 3 years of release.

In order to ensure that participants met the above criteria, they were screened via a brief telephone or face to face preliminary interview at least one week prior to formally scheduled interviews. Moreover, participants were rescreened while collecting demographic data prior to the start of interviews.

Saturation and Sampling Strategies

Initially, the researcher approached the study with the intention of interviewing 20-30 participants using snowball sampling. However, due to constraints of the research criteria, which resulted in difficulty in recruiting participants for the study, snowball and theoretical sampling were precluded. This resulted in the use of purposive sampling. Eventually, 19 individuals were screened and interviewed who fit the research criteria.

As the researcher progressed through the interviews, data collection, and analysis process, saturation of data was reached at the tenth (10th) participant. This was the point

where the researcher was unable to gather new data, which sparked fresh theoretical insights or revealed new properties within theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, prior to data saturation, two basic questions were asked (Daly, 2007). The first question was: has the researcher reached a point in the study where participants' experiences were understood as much as possible? And, has the researcher sampled a sufficient range of individuals so as to allow for adequate understanding of the nature and the variation that existed within participants' experiences (Daly, 2007)? Having integrated theoretic saturation whilst utilizing the constant comparative method, the researcher was better positioned to determine that the study had reached a point of saturation. Notwithstanding, to further refine the evolving categories and themes, nine (9) more participants were recruited, screened and interviewed.

Interview Procedure

Before interviewing participants, they were contacted and screened a week prior to the interviews. Participants were also given a 24-hour follow-up reminder before the day of the interview. Nineteen (19) participants were successfully screened and interviewed. Five (5) of these interviews were conducted face to face, while the remaining fourteen (14) were conducted via telephone. Interviews averaged 37 minutes, with the longest and shortest interviews lasting for 66 and 23 minutes respectively.

Before beginning interviews, the researcher went through the informed consent with participants by explaining the purpose of the study, the risks involved, and confidentiality in the research and interview process. Participants were also provided with the option to opt out of the interview if they felt uncomfortable in answering any question

posed during the interview process. Additionally, participants were informed about possible benefits of the study. To incentivize participants, a gift card of \$10 was mailed or delivered to each participant that completed the study.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Prior to data collection and analysis, the researcher was careful to consider the ethical and legal issues that would impact participants (post-incarcerated fathers) that were involved in the study. Of such, before any attempt was made to access data from participants, care was given to seek approval for the proposed study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), whose primary purpose is to ascertain that research plans have adequately considered the ethical dimensions of the participants that will be involved in the project (Sieber, 1992). Consequently, whilst doing the proposal, care was taken to ensure that the research protocol bore the scrutiny of the Institutional Review Board.

In light of the proposal that was submitted to the IRB, the researcher developed a protocol, which included a description of the participants that would be involved in the study. For this present study, the participants were biological fathers aged 25-70 who were once incarcerated for a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of fifteen (15) years in a penal institution. These men provided financial support to their children prior to being incarcerated, were released after serving two (2) or more years with no re-arrests within three (3) years of release, and had a child or children aged 3 to 18 years old between periods of incarceration and release. Additionally, the protocol also included documents outlining informed consent, risks and benefits of the research, and issues relating to privacy and confidentiality.

As it related to informed consent, Sieber (1992) observed that this is an ongoing two-way communication process between participants and the researcher as well as specific agreement about the conditions of research participation. Some of the elements that were present on the informed consent document included: an explanation of the purpose of the research, a description of any foreseeable risk or discomfort that the participant might experience, benefits involved in participating in the research, and a description of how privacy and confidentiality would be maintained. In keeping with the nature of informed consents as previously defined by Sieber (1992), the researcher was sensitive and reflexive during the interview process, so that participants were given the opportunity to exercise their autonomy in withdrawing from the interview should discomfort arise during the research process. Due to the nature of the participants (post-incarcerated fathers-some of whom were still struggling to connect with their children) involved in the study, the risk of discomfort was anticipated and of such, the researcher provided information to participants on how to contact counselors or therapists if the need arose. Furthermore, participants were also provided with the option to withdraw from interviews if they felt uncomfortable in completing interviews.

In regards to issues of privacy and confidentiality, participants were made aware of the confidential nature of the information shared during the data collection process. Firstly, the information shared during the interview were tape-recorded and stored on the researcher's hard drive prior to transcription. While the data were being transcribed and coded, two parallel lists were maintained, one with real names, and the other with coded names. So as to protect identity, participants on the coded list were anonymized through the assignment of pseudonyms. After transcription and publication of the research, the

recorded interviews on the researcher's hard drive along with the coded and original list, was destroyed. The real identities was left in the memory of the researcher, which would eventually disappear during the course of time (Oliver, 2003). The only limits (which was explained to participants) whereby confidentiality was not assured was if there seemed to be a potential threat to harm participants and others, or if there was suspicion that a child, an elderly person or a dependent adult were being abused (Sieber, 1992).

Data Collection, Recording, & Storage Procedures

Prior to data collection and analysis, participants were contacted and informed about the verbal and written confidentiality agreement. Subsequently, data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured intensive interviews. This method of data collection was selected for this particular study because it allowed for in-depth exploration of post-incarcerated fathers' experiences. Furthermore, this method of data collection has been observed as a useful method of interpretive query (Charmaz, 2014). In addition, in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to incorporate predetermined response categories, which allowed each participant to uncover their views whilst framing and structuring their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

While data were continuously being collected from participants, the researcher ensured that the data collected were recorded and stored appropriately. A telephone software device was utilized for recording data. The recorded data were destroyed after the recordings were transferred and stored on a computer, with an additional back up on a removable hardware device (USB). Passcodes were assigned to both computer and external devices and only the researcher and PI had access to the stored information.

Prior to analyzing the stored data, word-for-word transcription of recorded interviews were done onto a word processing document. As a part of the process in safeguarding participants' information whilst maintaining reliable and valid information, participants were assigned pseudonyms. Thus, during the transcription process, much care was given in protecting participants' information, whilst carefully making sure that the content disclosed and recorded were the expressed experiences of participants as disclosed in the interview process.

Data Analysis and Coding Procedures

Subsequent to transcribing data, the researcher began the process of data analysis. This involved the importation of transcriptions from word documents into a software designed for coding called MAXQDA. The software provided the researcher with the advantage of creating standardized categories or headings, which was utilized for coding later transcripts. From the created categories in MAXQDA, the researcher began the data analysis process by adapting Charmaz's (2014) approach to coding and analyzing grounded theory data. Three phases of coding were utilized namely: initial, focused, and theoretical coding.

The initial phase of coding began with the researcher naming each line or segment of the transcribed data. During this phase, the researcher was careful to interact with, and succinctly name the data as described by participants in the interviews. Ten transcripts were coded during the initial phase, which resulted in approximately 1,040 codes. An example of the initial coding process was when participants were asked what the term father or fatherhood meant to them. One participant's definition was as follows:

“Fathering or fatherhood to me means someone who has kids and being able to be there to nurture and to guide them with the tools they need to have them navigate their life.”

The initial codes assigned to these lines were *Nurturer* and *Guide/Equipper*. As the researcher continued with this phase of coding, Charmaz (2014) provided some additional guidelines for coding, which the researcher took into account. These included being open, staying close to the data, keeping the codes simple and precise, preserving actions, and comparing data with data (Charmaz, 2014).

The second phase of coding utilized by the researcher was focused coding. This process required the researcher to sift, sort, and analyze, large amounts of the initially coded data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138). During this phase, the researcher focused on initial codes that seemed to appear more frequently and had more significance than other codes (Charmaz, 2014). A typical example where initial codes were analyzed and collapsed into more focused units were the different meanings that participants ascribed to the term father. In the present study, participants’ descriptions of a father were initially coded as *provider, guide, nurturer, spiritual leader, mentor, etc.* During focused coding, these were recoded as *definition of a father*. Similarly, as participants recognized and described their emotional experiences, initial codes that were similar among transcripts were clustered within one code. Examples in the present study is the collapsing of initial codes such as *hurt, upsets, anger, hate, and frustration* into the focused code – *Anger*, and the collapsing of the initial codes of *apprehension, fear, panic, and stress*, into the focused code – *Anxiety*. Throughout the process of focused coding, the researcher was better able to organize and manage the emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2014, p. 141).

Subsequent to focused coding, the researcher proceeded to the third level of coding known as theoretical coding. According to Charmaz (2014), this level of coding is sophisticated and follows the codes selected and developed during focused coding. In this study for example, the theoretical code *Ideology of Fatherhood* as seen in Figure 1, followed the previously developed focused codes *definition of father*, *experience with one's father*, and *experience as a father*. This allowed the researcher to theorize data and focused codes. Furthermore, the theoretical codes developed provided a medium through which the conceptual relationship between substantive codes was established, as well as it provided a means through which the analytic story moved in a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2014).

All in all, as the researcher utilized the three phases of coding along with the different analytic tools at the researcher's disposal, these processes allowed for the emergence of a theoretical model (*Figure 1*), which explained the reintegration experiences of post-incarcerated fathers.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a significant benchmark in qualitative work. Creswell (2014) stressed this importance by emphasizing the role that truth-value and validity play in any given study. As such, the researcher utilized a number of criteria to establish the veracity of the data collected. These included credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, which provided a means through which trustworthiness of the researcher's findings could be established (Tolley, Ulin, Mack, Robinson, & Succop, 2016).

Firstly, to demonstrate the credibility of findings from the present study, the researcher utilized three interrelated techniques to fulfill this criterion. They involved looking for negative cases for emerging hypotheses, testing rival explanations, and obtaining explanations for inconsistencies arising from emerging theories (Morgan, Krueger, & King, 1998; Patton). The above techniques were utilized through peer debriefing among dissertation committee members, as well as comparisons of transcriptions with two independent coders. For the two sets of independent coded transcripts, there was one disagreement between the researcher and one of the coders. This had to do with how the sub-code *fear* was categorized under *anxiety* during focused coding. This discrepancy was clarified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association. & American Psychiatric Association. DSM-5 Task Force., 2013). Apart from that, there were no other notable discrepancies among the coded transcripts.

Dependability was another valuable criterion that was utilized in establishing trustworthiness (Tolley et al., 2016). So as to ensure that research findings were dependable and free from researcher's bias, findings were validated via peer debriefing. This process gave the researcher's peers the opportunity to review and ask questions about the study, whilst adding additional interpretation beyond that of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, the researcher employed a retired expert in qualitative studies, who reviewed the entire project (Creswell, 2014). In effect, this enhanced the veracity of the researcher's findings.

Similarly, the researcher also utilized the confirmability criterion to establish authenticity. This was necessary because qualitative researchers are not detached "neutral

scientists unencumbered by their own experiences and values” (Tolley et al., 2016, p. 213). Furthermore, even though it was the researcher’s intent to approach the study from a neutral lens, the researcher was not immune to personal bias, which could have impacted the outcome of the study. Thus, for the sake of integrity, personal biases that emerged prior to or during the data collection and analysis process, were communicated under the section – researcher subjectivity.

Since the researcher was subject to personal bias during data collection, analysis, and interpretation, it was important to employ member checking as a strategy in assessing credibility. Through member checking, the researcher gave participants the opportunity to review the credibility of the researcher’s findings and interpretation (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This aspect of verifying credibility is considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the most important in establishing credibility. As such, member checking was performed by summarizing data at the end of interviews and allowing participants to immediately correct errors or challenge interpretations (Erlandson et al., 1993). In addition, the researcher provided copies of respective parts of the inquiry to participants, so that the data collected and interpreted could be reviewed for accuracy.

The final criterion utilized in establishing trustworthiness was the issue of transferability or generalizability. Since qualitative enquiry is generally limited to specific contexts, some researchers are of the notion that it is impossible to make inferences to other populations (Tolley et al., 2016). Similarly, Maxwell (2005) rightly observed that because qualitative researchers usually study single settings or a small number of individuals using theoretical rather than probability sampling, they rarely

make claims about the generalizability of their accounts. Notwithstanding, the researcher ensured that conclusions from the present study were carefully drawn, and that data were present to support them. Furthermore, the researcher was careful to describe the research context, the characteristics of research participants, as well as the nature of the interactions between the researcher and the participants (Tolley et al., 2016). By so doing, potential researchers will be able to decide how transferrable the findings are to other contexts (Tolley et al., 2016).

Researcher's Subjectivity

The researcher identified as an Afro-Jamaican migrant whom at the time of this present research, was engaged in doctoral studies at Loma Linda University, California. He approached this study as a father and a husband who experienced the joy, challenge and privilege of being a co-parent of three children - two boys and a girl. The researcher's interest in the present study, resulted from his general interest in the subject of fatherhood, but more particularly because of his observed and lived experiences of the effects of fatherlessness on the lives of children. As an individual who has never experienced incarceration, as well as not having had friends who were fathers that were once incarcerated and subsequently released, the researcher approached the present study with a neutral stance whilst maintaining curiosity in understanding the phenomenon at hand. Notwithstanding, the researcher's interest in the area of fatherhood is driven by two primary reasons.

Firstly, during his early childhood, the researcher did not have the luxury of living with both parents – at least after the age of six. This was due to the fact that his parents

separated at an early age due to infidelity on his father's part. As a result of this separation, the researcher's mom moved out with his siblings and himself. In effect, his mom took the responsibility of being the sole breadwinner and parental figure in the researcher and his siblings' lives. Notwithstanding, even though the researcher's dad was a non-resident father, he still played a minimal role in contributing financially and offered child-rearing advice when he interacted with his children. The absence of the researcher's biological father while growing up had significant effects on the researcher and his siblings and has helped to shape the researcher's view with regards to important and various roles that fathers should play in the lives of their children.

Secondly, while working at a Christian K-8 grade school in the mid-west region of the United States, the researcher was given the responsibility of teaching a few classes. In addition, he also provided spiritual care for the students and staff at the academy. During the period, the researcher realized that the students had behavioral issues to the extent that some students were suspended and expelled from school. In addition, the students' academic performances were very poor. After careful assessment and engagement with the students, the researcher realized that approximately ninety-five percent (95%) of these students did not live with their fathers. Some of the reasons they gave were that their fathers were incarcerated, dead, or "missing in action" (absent). This seemed to have had spillover effects in regard to how they related to each other, their academic performances, and how they related and responded to classroom instructions.

Based on the researcher's previous experiences, the researcher sensed the need to focus his research on the subject of fatherhood with the desire that findings will be

utilized to help various stakeholders find meaningful ways to facilitate engagement between fathers and their children.

The Researcher as a Tool in the Research Process

As a researcher who chose to utilize grounded theory as the desired methodological approach in studying the present phenomenon, there were a number of notable considerations that the researcher deliberated on as he applied himself in utilizing this method. Firstly, in engaging in research inquiry, the researcher's desire was to remain open as he sought to understand and appreciate the lived experiences of research participants. This called for a reflexive approach to the interview process.

As the researcher engaged in interviews with participants, he was careful to be reflexive during the research process. For the present study, the researcher's role was that of an outsider, as well as an insider. As an outsider, the researcher acknowledged that he had never committed a serious crime for which he had been incarcerated. This allowed him to approach interviews from a neutral stance. Notwithstanding, there were times prior to interviews that the researcher experienced some level of apprehension and anxiety for fear of not being accepted by participants. Nevertheless, the researcher's fears were quelled by prior contact and screening of participants, and also the less invasive questions that initiated the interviews. As an outsider, at times it was difficult for the researcher to fully understand some of the terms that participants used to describe their experiences. When experiences like these took place during the interviews, participants were willing to explain and give full description of their experiences so that the researcher could fully understand the context from which participants were speaking.

From the perspective of an insider, the researcher identified with participants because of his status as a father and parent of children. This insider status allowed the researcher to readily empathize with participants in their desire to function as fathers and co-parents to their children. In addition, as fathers shared their stories of not having a father around during different periods, the researcher could also identify with some of these participants' early experiences. Even though the researcher benefited from his status as an insider to the extent that he was able to understand participants' desire to connect with their children and function in their paternal roles, the researcher was careful not to allow his insider status to be projected on participants during the interviews.

Furthermore, as research participants shared their experiences, it was important for the researcher to study how they explained their statements and actions so as to see what analytic sense could be made of them (Charmaz, 2006). Similarly, it was also important that as the researcher engaged with his participants, he remained open and attentive enough to what was happening in particular scenes and statements received during interviews so that he could learn more about the lives of his participants (Charmaz, 2006). Attention was also paid to what was seen, heard, and sensed during interviews so that accurate conclusions could be drawn from the data that were collected.

So as to control the research process and to increase the analytic power of the research, attention was paid to the components of grounded theory practice (Charmaz, 2006). Of significance was the simultaneous involvement in the data collection and analysis process, and the use of the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). Through these processes, the researcher was able to be scientific, creative, and open to what was revealed in the data that emerged (Babbie, 2013). In addition, through the

constant comparative method, the researcher was able to build a theory as categories emerged whilst at the same time be in a position to determine theoretical saturation (Daly, 2007). This allowed the researcher to develop confidence in the data as they accumulated and as the research process continued.

While engaging in the research process, the researcher practiced the art of reflexivity. The researcher did this by periodically stepping back and maintaining an attitude of skepticism as data emerged (Babbie, 2013). Furthermore, throughout the process of data collection and accumulation, the researcher checked accumulated data against what was previously collected and interpreted so as to get a better account of what the data were communicating (Babbie, 2013). Additionally, the new data that emerged were observed and tested against previously collected data and interpretation so as to validate what was previously collected and documented.

During the research process, the researcher also demonstrated ethical standards. By being ethical, Corbin and Strauss (2015) observed that the researcher has an ethical responsibility not just to his or herself, but also to the profession that the researcher belongs, and the participants that are involved in the research process. Thus, while maintaining a high level of moral integrity, the researcher practiced honesty, confidentiality, and fairness throughout the research process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Consequently, informed consent which provided information about the research process was distributed to participants with participants being given the option to opt out of the research process if they felt uncomfortable. Additionally, the researcher practiced confidentiality to the extent that research participants were assured of the privacy and non-disclosure of information collected during and after the research process. As the

research process progressed, from time to time the researcher felt emotionally involved or emotionally drained. During these periods, the researcher put aside the research for a brief period and took a break (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). All in all, as the researcher practiced the aforementioned principles and values during the research process, justice was served to the researcher, participants, and the profession to which the researcher is a part.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers in Southern California. The theoretical understanding of participants' reintegration experiences was based on two conceptual questions. How do fathers experience reintegration with their children after incarceration? And, what were some of the factors that enhanced or hindered fathers' experiences of reintegration with their children? In order to answer these questions, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory was corroborated with Charmaz's (2014) grounded theory approach to qualitative study. The first question was answered through the themes that evolved from the grounded theory process, which will be discussed in this chapter. The second question (which will be answered in chapter six) was answered through the corroboration of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, with the themes that emerged from the grounded theory process.

To further explore the experiences of participants, three overarching methodological questions were used to elicit participants' perception of their reintegration experiences with their children. The questions utilized were: What were your experiences with your child (children) like prior to being incarcerated? During your period of incarceration, how did you experience your relationship with your child (children)? Since you've been released, what has your experience with your child (children) been like? These questions were followed up with a set of open-ended questions that captured the essence of fathers' relationship experiences with their children before, during, and after incarceration.

The themes that emerged from the grounded theory process, provided a comprehensive understanding of participants' reintegration experiences. These themes are illustrated in Figure 1 below. They included participants' ideology of fatherhood, nodal events, and evolving fatherhood values. These themes will be discussed in greater details in the following paragraphs.

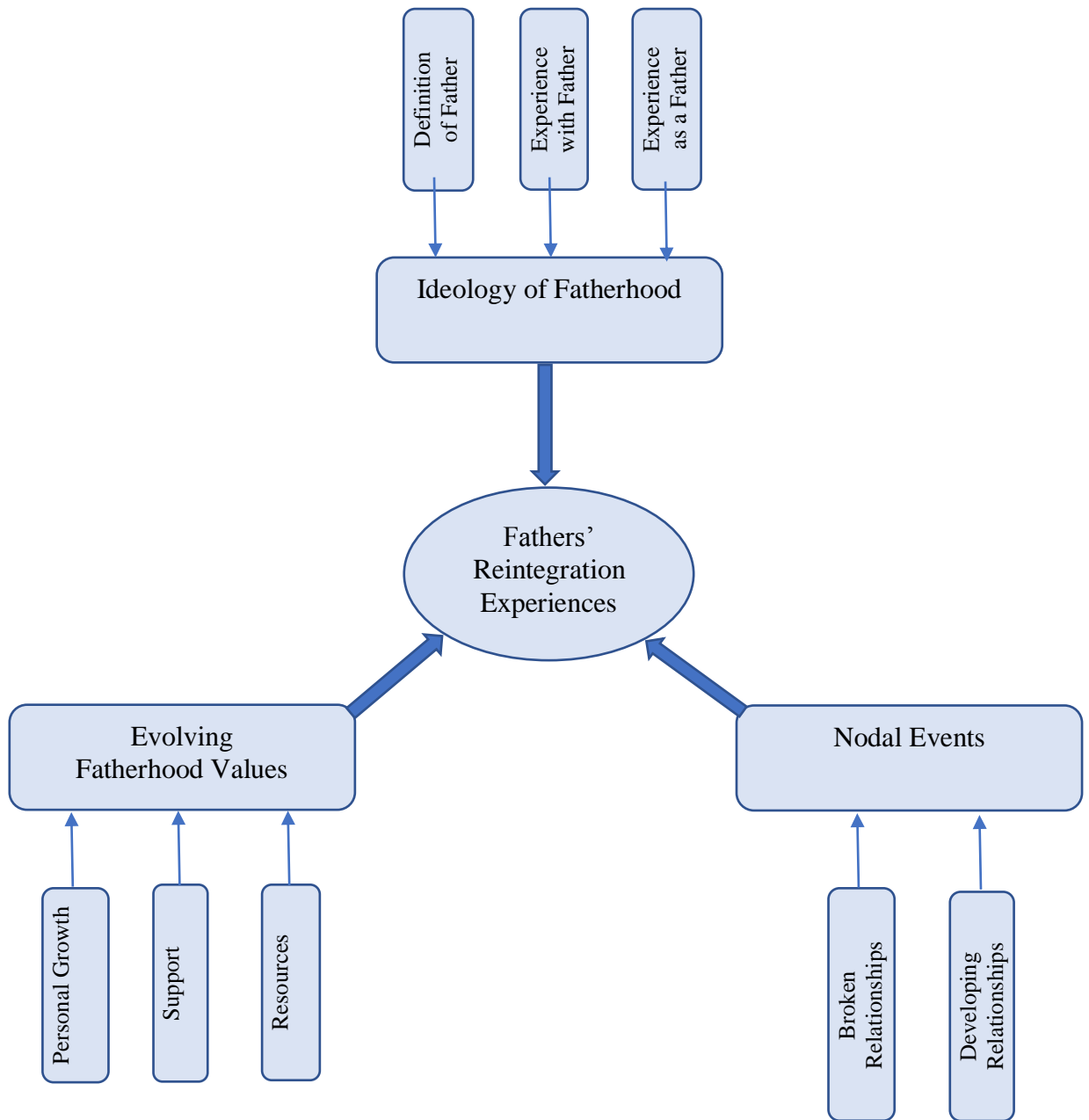


Figure 1. A Theoretical Model of Fathers' Reintegration Experiences

Ideology of Fatherhood

A covert, but yet significant theme that emerged from the grounded theory process, was the ideological views of fatherhood held by participants. Participants views were shaped by three factors. These were the varied definitions ascribed to fatherhood by participants, the early experiences participants had with or without their fathers, and participants own experiences as fathers to their children prior to being incarcerated. The nuances of participants' views of fatherhood, provided the basis through which subsequent themes as well as their reintegration experiences could further be understood.

Definition of Father

The ideological views held by participants regarding what it means to be a father, seemed to be partly influenced by the definition that each participant assigned to fatherhood. When asked what the term father or fatherhood meant to them, participants ascribed different notions to the terms. Some of the ideas associated with fatherhood included one who is a leader, a mentor, a moral guide, a biological parent, a protector, a provider and one who is present for his children. Moreover, most of these ideas that participants proffered about fatherhood, were synonymous with the roles that fathers are expected to play in the lives of their children. The two most common roles that participants assigned to fatherhood were being a provider and being present for one's kids.

The provider role, was evident among participants who were identified by the pseudonyms Andre, Don, and Lovelle. For Andre, he specifically described a father as “...someone who takes the time out and make sure their children are well provided for.”

Don who shared similar sentiments, suggested that being a father meant that the individual should “...*be able to provide for your kids...to give them insights on life.*”

Lovelle added another dimension in regard to what being a paternal provider looks like.

He suggested that a father should “...*provide the stimulus, the stabilization as a father in the family...*”

In addition to being a provider, participants also noted that a father is someone who is present for his kids. Terms participants used to describe what it means to be present included being there, being available, and being accessible. For Gordon, being there as a father meant that the father was:

“... actively participating in your child’s life in their mental and spiritual development and that you are also there to add to them and to enrich their lives in whatever means and whatever is necessary in order for them to be well-rounded in society.”

Rupert intimated that there is a holistic component in what it means to be there as a father and to provide for one’s children. He stated that, a father is “... *someone who is there ... emotionally, physically, mentally, and be there for anything that they need.*” Beau further explained that a father is “...*a biological person who loves a child enough to be there for them in the role of parenting, a person that is a part of a child’s life, with the intent to make life practical for their existence.*” Victor, another participant, summed up these terms and roles assigned to fathers as follows:

“He should *be there* for them and comfort them and just guide them through all the things that they are going to be experiencing throughout life. Just taking care of them *providing* for them protecting them, and loving them and being kind to them, *just being there for them* when they need you and when they need support. That’s what a father is to me. *Someone who is always there* looking after their child, and always looking after the well-being of their child as best as they can.”

Despite the various notions that participants preferred to “father” or “fatherhood,” being

present and providing for one's children were the predominant roles that stood out as participants shared their ideas on the subject.

Experience with one's Father

In addition to the different notions proffered to fatherhood by participants, participants' experiences with or without their fathers also helped to shape their ideology of fatherhood. Of the nineteen participants, eight lived with their biological fathers during their early years. The other eleven participants' biological fathers were absent during their early years. As such, they were partially nurtured by their mothers, grandmothers, and stepfathers, or adopted through the foster care system. Suffice to say, the early experiences that participants had with, or without their biological fathers, were either negative or positive and they all seemed to have influenced participants' perception of fatherhood, as well as the role they eventually played in their children's lives.

Andre and Lovelle, both grew up with their biological fathers. They both had positive experiences with their father while growing up. For Andre, he viewed his father as a "role model" because after his mother left, his dad maintained his commitment to him and his siblings during their early ages. He described his early experience with his father as follows:

"My father actually was the model role (role model) father. When I was a child, my mother left, she took off and abandoned me and my five siblings in a house in Racine, Wisconsin. And my father who was in the hospital when she left got out of the hospital, picked up the "chips" and continued to work as hard as he could to support us with no other help whatsoever." ...He would leave at 4 in the morning, and come back at 1 in the afternoon and would be gone in the evening again, continuing to make money... So I really had a good experience with my father. My dad was there and showed me how to be a dad."

Lovelle also had a similar experience because his early years with his dad influenced him in how he took care of his kids and family. He described his early experiences below.

“Yes. It was good because it help me to know that my father was a provider, a disciplinarian, and you know those things were things that I brought in to help me being a father too you know, making sure you provide for your kids first and providing for your family first and providing love and discipline and all...you know...”

Not all participants who lived with their biological fathers had positive experiences. Randy whose father was a pastor by profession, felt that he was “pastored more than parented.” Randy further shared that the experiences he had with his father shaped the way he fathered his own children. In that, he felt like he was more of a “disciplinarian” because he wasn’t “emotional.” As a result, his children described him as “mean.” Similarly, Keith describe his father as an intelligent and successful businessman. However, Keith said his dad was “physically and emotionally detached.” Furthermore, even though Keith desired to father differently as opposed to how his father grew him, Keith found himself displaying the same characteristics as his dad. When asked about how he felt his experiences while growing up with his dad influenced the way in which he grew his own son, Keith shared the following.

Keith: Well, that’s interesting. I’ve always said I never wanted to turn out like my dad. And I think that until I got sober, I was just like my dad.

Interviewer: Okay, okay. In terms of what?

Keith: Ah... Well, my dad was very intelligent, I did very well in school. He was a very good athlete, I played college football...He was financially successful, I was financially successful... He was the type of guy that would screw you in business, and I did the same thing...And I also drank a lot and used drugs and I was a mean guy at home just like my dad was.

On the contrary, participants whose biological fathers were absent and were nurtured by different caregivers, also had varied experiences during their early years which influenced how they fathered their own children. Gordon whose father was absent

from his life indicated that unlike his father who wasn't there for him, *"I'm always gonna be around for my kids..."* Similarly, Greg claimed that he *"... didn't know what a father was because at a young age I was abandoned by my father."* Victor, who grew up with his stepfather, felt that his stepfather had a positive influence on his life. Victor recalled that his stepfather *"took care of me"* and *"was there to look after me."* Furthermore, Victor disclosed that his stepfather *"... would discipline me and give me good advice ... and provide for me certain things that I needed when I was growing up."* All in all, these early experiences influenced participants in their future roles as fathers to their children.

Experience as a Father

In addition to the varied definitions that participants assigned to the term father and the different experiences they had with their fathers or caregivers while growing up, participant's early experiences as fathers to their own children prior to their incarceration, also helped to shape their ideologies of fatherhood. Furthermore, the early experiences that these men had with their kids also influenced them in their desire to reconnect with their children after incarceration. Moreover, participants' early experiences with or without their fathers had a lot to do with how they functioned as fathers to their own children. This resulted in participants either learning from the mistakes of their fathers and trying to do better or, following the negative examples of their fathers in how they functioned in their roles as fathers to their children.

Two notable participants that were influenced by the absence of their fathers were Gordon and Greg. Except for one year that he spent with his dad while in high school, Gordon and his siblings were nurtured by their mother. During this time, Gordon's mom

taught him and his brothers how to do chores around the house. By the time Gordon had his children, he was able to transfer and integrate what his mom taught him as a child, as he fulfilled his paternal role in the lives of his children. When asked about his early experiences with his children, Gordon said *“I was really close, I think I was more involved in their lives more than their mother was...especially in their earlier years...when they were younger...”* He provided evidence of his closeness and involvement by stating that *“... at one time when they were growing up she (**participant here refers to the children’s mother/his wife**) didn't even know their clothes size, because I took care of all of that stuff. I did their clothes, the girls’ hair...”*

Greg’s experience with his children was different. He was also abandoned by his dad and was told stories of how his dad was abusive to his mom while she was pregnant. For a while, he grew up with his stepfather who was also abusive to his mom. When asked about his early experiences with his own children, Greg candidly recalled:

Greg: I'm going to say it was negative. Because I didn't want to be around them. I was hiding from them. I abandoned my children.

Interviewer: Mmm...mmm... Much as how your dad abandoned you?

Greg: Yes. Just as how my dad abandoned me, I abandoned them. I'd see them once a week but if I see them walking down the street, I try to run and hide from them because I don't want them to see me.

Like Gordon and Greg, other participants shared similar experiences. However, for participants such as Gordon who had positive experiences with their children prior to incarceration, especially during their early years, it was easier for them to resume and function in their previous roles. On the contrary, participants such as Greg who matured during his incarceration and had a new perspective on fatherhood, had a lot more work to do. In that, they had to gain the trust of their children as well as their children’s

caregivers by demonstrating that they had matured and were now committed to fulfilling their roles as fathers to their children.

All in all, how participants reintegrated into the lives of their children as well as how they functioned in their paternal roles after incarceration were influenced by a number of factors. These included their understanding of who or what a father is, participant's early experiences with or without their fathers, and their early experiences with their children prior to their incarceration. Taken together, these partly explained the level of success participants experienced as they reconnected with their children after incarceration.

Nodal Events

Another important theme that emerged from the study were nodal events. Nodal events referred to defining moments in fathers' lives, which were significantly related to the level of success that fathers experienced as they reintegrated or sought reintegration with their children. For the most part, these events were evident in the relationship experiences between fathers and their children, as well as between fathers and their children's caregivers. Furthermore, fathers' relationship experiences were better understood within the context of time (before, during, and after incarceration) and quality (good or bad). These critical moments that emerged from fathers' relationship experiences were categorized as developing relationships or broken relationships and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Developing Relationships

The first aspect of the theme - nodal events, which impacted fathers' reintegration experiences with their children was developing relationships. Prior to incarceration, some fathers in the study had good relationships with their children and were actively engaged in their children's lives. However, when these fathers became incarcerated, their roles as fathers as well as their relationships with their children became interrupted. For these fathers who were serious about the role they played in their children's lives, relationships with their children needed to be maintained. One of the ways in which these relationships were maintained was through caregivers. These caregivers included mothers and grandmothers who facilitated visitation and phone calls between fathers and their children. As a result, relationships continued to be developed between fathers and their children.

One father (Beau) who was married to his children's mom while he was incarcerated, said he only had one visit and it "...*was kind of tough on them...*" However, in order to continue in his paternal role, Beau's wife ensured that he got the chance to communicate with his children through various means. Beau provided a detailed description below.

"Well...I probably had weekly contact with them, where I would call, and you know, speak with them or there were opportunities where we communicated through letters, I would write them or send them pictures, or you know, they would send me pictures, you know things like that. When it was their birthdays, I would buy things from the prison store, snacks and what have you... and mail them to them just to remind them that I was still there and that I'm still a part of their lives and give them some excitement to have while I was away..."

Rupert who had multiple children with different mothers and whose relationship was broken with the mothers, was still able to maintain his relationship with one of his

daughters whom he said, “*always write to me.*” Furthermore, Rupert said that “...*for my birthday she would always write, daddy I love you and I miss you...*” For Fred who wrote his kids and got visits, his mom played a pivotal role in how he continued to develop and maintain his relationship with his kids. Fred provided details, as described below.

Interviewer: Were you able to connect with your children during this time?

Fred: Ah...Yeah...I would write them and they would come and see me as much as my mom would brought them. I wrote them and they would write me back, it was a constant connection thing.

Interviewer: So these are your two older daughters you're talking about?

Fred: All of them, if my mom could bring four kids at the time, she would bring them.

There were also critical moments for fathers during their reintegration process in which their children played integral roles in both their reintegration and relationship building process. Among participants, two notable experiences were with two fathers who go by the pseudonyms Keith and Rupert. Upon release from prison, Keith who maintained his relationship with his son while he was incarcerated, sought to resume his paternal role. However, due to financial challenges and with no proper housing to exercise his custodial rights over his son, Keith’s son took the initiative and visited him at the facility where he was staying. In fact, Keith acknowledged these moments as critical ones and perceived that what his son did saved him from depression. Keith described his post-incarceration experience with his son as follows.

Keith: ... The second wife as I said was a prescription drug addict. So I had to make a choice to protect my own sobriety...ahhmm... I moved out and I moved into a sober living...And it became more difficult to see him because I didn't have a car, I was only making a little bit of money at the time...but he came to visit me where I was once a week. And he would pick me up and we would go do stuff, he saved me from probably some big depression.

For Rupert who gained custody over his teenage daughter and her other two siblings, his daughter played an important role in his ability to receive custody over her and her siblings. Rupert provided the following details.

Rupert: My little girl, the youngest one that's 13 now, we have the best relationship anybody else could have and the way that I could back that up is because I ended up having custody for her.

Interviewer: Ok.

Rupert: So, she chose, and her voice was heard in a courtroom, saying that she wanted to be with me even though the mother has never been incarcerated, never had a ticket in her lifetime, never smoked a cigarette in her life...has been in the same job 17 years. My daughter didn't care about how much stuff she could have had with her, but she cared of being with me till I still have her with me. And I've had custody for them for 3 years...and even though I don't have much, she chooses to be with me. And I think it goes back to my childhood, the way I was cared for, the way I was loved, it's the same way I could give her...And sometimes I'm sure you know that the kids, it's not about material things. It's how you care about them, how you care about them, how you show them, and I am blessed to have the two younger children with me.

As seen in the details provided, Rupert attributes his ability to successfully reconnect with his children to his early childhood. In that, as a child, he was loved and cared for and in turn was able to demonstrate this to his kids.

All in all, even though these men's role as fathers were restricted during periods of incarceration, their children and their children's caregivers, played important roles at critical times during these periods. These moments helped to define the level of success experienced by these fathers as they made these transitions.

Broken Relationships

As previously noted, a number of fathers had defining moments in their relationships which allowed them to experience different levels of success as they pursued reintegration with their children. However, this was not the case for all fathers as

some participants experienced critical moments in their relationships that prevented or limited successful reintegration. Under the theme – nodal events, experiences such as these were categorized as broken relationships and were sometimes precipitated by fathers’ repeated offences, which ended up with them being reincarcerated. In other cases, broken relationships between fathers and their children were as a result of estranged relationships between participants and their children’s mothers. Below, are examples of participants’ experiences.

Andrew who had five children with his wife and who was incarcerated five times before his last incarceration, explained that his wife felt betrayed because he got reincarcerated and as a result, divorced him while he was incarcerated and remarried someone who was abusive to her. In his own words, Andrew explained that “*after the third incarceration, my wife moved on. She had actually divorced me. She went on to pursue other relationships that didn't work, and she got abused in those as well both physically and mentally... which also affected my kids.*” His kids were affected to the point that whereas previously they would have accepted his phone calls (i.e. during his earlier incarcerations), they had now gotten older and chose to distance themselves from him. Andrew shared further that:

“It was almost as if we did not have a relationship cause like I said, they had gotten older and they were like, ‘Ah... man he's just keep on doing the same thing, I don't want to have nothing to do with him.’”

After his last incarceration, Andrew remarried his children’s mother. However, his relationship with his children was still estranged to the extent that they would call their mom but were still unforgiving towards Andrew. When asked about his relationship with them presently, Andrew disclosed that his relationship was “*still distanced.*” Andrew said that he received “*no happy birthday, no love, no interest, no nothing.*”

Andre also had a similar experience with the two eldest of his four children. After his first incarceration, he had promised his children that he wouldn't commit another criminal offense. However, this was not to be. Andre found himself in conflict with the law and was rearrested. During his incarceration, he tried to communicate with his children. However, even though his two younger children didn't mind communicating with him, his older children were unresponsive. Andre disclosed that, *"I was stressed out because I knew that my oldest son at that time period hated my guts and didn't want anything to do with me. He refused to talk to me on the telephone, so did my daughter."* Andre conceded that he had lied to his children because *"I told them that I wouldn't commit another crime again and I committed another crime and I went back to prison and that was something that I promised them that I would never do."* Andre further disclosed that he tried to write his children more often than he would call them during his incarceration. However, Andre intimated that his younger children responded but he only got one response from his older children. Below is an excerpt of the response he got from his children as recalled by Andre.

Andre: I might have been able to call once every 3 months... I did write on a constant basis. And as I say, my two older children did not respond...

Interviewer: mmm...mmm...

Andre: And the one letter that I did get was ah... I don't want to talk to you. You know what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Wow!!

Andre: ...You f***** up I don't want them to have nothing to do with you, leave me alone! Don't talk to me. Acting as if I don't exist, because you acted as if I didn't exist...

Interviewer: Yeah...yeah...ok...

Andre: You cared more about whatever you were doing than staying home and taking care of your children. And you left us with this woman, with this evil Beast!

Interviewer: mmm...mmm..., and these are the older ones right...they view their mom as a beast right?

Andre: Yes. All 4 of them do.

At the time of the interview, Andre had temporary custody of his two younger children due to their mom's drug abuse problem and her instable living conditions. His older children had gone to live on their own and the participant was still not able to repair his relationship with them.

For Payton and his children, his relationship with them began to disintegrate while he was incarcerated. When asked about the quality of contact he had with his children and whether or not he received any visits, Payton said he wrote them letters. However, he later found out that "*they weren't getting the letters.*" Furthermore, prior to being released from prison, his ex-wife filed for divorce and placed a restraining order on him. This made Payton's reintegration experience with his children difficult as explained below.

Payton: Well...ahh so when I got out of prison... I... I... ahh went directly to court and they gave me monitored visits once a month with my children so that's what I did for 11 months...

Interviewer: They gave you what?

Payton: Monitored visits with my children...So I had to go and pay for a therapist to sit there and watch us...you know...but ahh...right after that... I was going back to court to get my visitations extended and she took me to court to get everything transferred up to Fulton, California, which is where she had moved a couple months prior...you know

Interviewer: mmm...mmm...

Payton: ...So that was granted, and they moved up there so I haven't been able to pursue any other relationship with them because financially I can't do it...

Thus, as noted in the conversation with Payton above, when Payton got out of prison, his relationship with his children disintegrated because of his broken relationship with his wife, the monitored visits placed on him by the courts, and the geographic distance and financial costs involved in maintaining his relationship with his children.

In summary, it was evident that there were critical moments in participants' lives that determined the level of success that they experienced as they pursued reintegration with their children after incarceration. These defining moments had a lot to do with the relationship quality that fathers had with their children, as well their children's caregivers during periods of incarceration. For participants who experienced some level of success in reintegrating with their children, relationships were maintained with their children and caregivers through letter writing, phone calls, and visits during periods of incarceration. On the contrary, some participants were not so successful. This was because of broken relationships with their children who felt betrayed because of their reincarceration, or broken relationships with their children's mothers who divorced them and pursued other relationships.

Evolving Fatherhood Values

As noted previously, fathers' reintegration experiences were partly shaped by the ideological views that they had about fatherhood, as well as nodal events. In addition, there was also a third theme that emerged from the data that seemed to contribute to fathers' reintegration experiences. This theme can be described as a perceived system of beliefs that fathers developed as they contemplated and embarked on their reintegration experiences with their children. Moreover, these belief systems continued to develop even after their reintegration and was clustered around the theme - evolving fatherhood values. This theme was further categorized as personal growth, support, and resources.

Personal Growth

As fathers prepared to reintegrate into the lives of their children, there seemed to be an awareness and value placed on how much they had matured as individuals throughout their reintegration process. Fathers' perceived growth process began during periods of incarceration and extended beyond that period. This was demonstrated at various levels and was a valuable component to their reintegration experiences. Some of the areas where participants perceived growth included the new perspective they had as fathers, their commitment and responsibility to fatherhood, emotional maturity, and spirituality.

New Perspective

One of the first areas where participants expressed maturation was their outlook on life. This area of growth seemed to have been precipitated by moments of reflection during which time participants unwittingly felt the urge to make changes to their lives. This desire for change, resulted in cognitive and behavioral adjustments, which in turn had rippling effects on other areas of their lives. Consequently, a number of individuals in the study indicated that they had a new perspective on how they thought about life in general, and their relationships with their children in particular. As a result, they were compelled to act differently when compared to previous occasions.

Below are examples of participants' responses to questions that had to do with their experiences while preparing for reentry, as well as their adjustment shortly thereafter. Of significance was the new perspective that participants had in their relationships and roles as fathers.

Lovelle: But, I had to learn to be patient, and to be honest and open. It couldn't be because I'm dad and I said so anymore, you know I have to look at things from a different perspective of... you know, I missed time as dad so, our relationship is hurt so I had to build her trust.

Don: I believe it taught me that there was more to life than what I was out there doing. The things that I was doing was running with gangs and all that stuff and it took me away from my family and it opened my eyes to a lot of different things. I took some of the things that I was doing, and I dropped them.

Andre: A lot of the classes that I take, and (the people) I made friendship with, I decided that the only way that I could change the situation that I was in was by changing my image.

Andrew: Once I found out why I began to behave like I did, that's when the lights came on that I needed to get into some self- help groups...

Oliver: The things that I was doing was getting more focused on changing the old man meaning my way of thoughts, meaning my actions...the things that I had done. If I didn't look at change from that standpoint of what I had to really do with this. I would never ever be able to live a life without being back incarcerated again so I had to take a serious look as a whole and knowing that I had to make some serious adjustments life living changes to be able to be the father ah... the husband and all these things that I needed to learn on my own independently...

Greg: After, I started going through my new lifestyle. My new lifestyle of change, I started to understand what a father was. And I learned that a dad and a father are two different things. All along I was just being a dad. I wasn't really being a father. Because I abandoned my children too.

Based on the aforementioned experiences that participants had, it allowed for them to grow through their reintegration experiences with their children. This in part was precipitated by their newly developed outlook on life.

Commitment and Responsibility

In addition to the perceived changes that fathers experienced in their relationships as a result of their new perspectives, fathers also matured in their level of commitment and responsibility that they now displayed as fathers. This was in stark contrast to their

previous experiences with their children. Greg for example, who hid from his kids prior to his incarceration, now had a new perspective on what it meant to be a father. As a result, he valued the prospect of being a more committed and responsible father - something he did not receive from his own father because his dad abandoned him at an early age. Greg shared:

Greg: I had set my mind, I made it my choice and I made it my decision to leave the gang and prison stuff alone and I think that was the best decision that I could ever make...I didn't hide from them you know...like I was in the past. Like I did in the past, I hid from them. But you know, I came out with an all-new different mentality, with a new mindset of me reconnecting with my children because I told myself I need to be raising them, I need to be tucking them in, I need to help them with their homework...if they are crying or having problems, I need to be the one there for them because they do not have a mother.

Another father who goes by the pseudonym Eddy, shared how after being released from prison, his wife informed him that she had divorced him. Seven months after his release, she brought their sons to him, which he had to take full responsibility for because he had now become their primary custodian. Eddy shared that after his release, his wife visited him for the first time. By her second visit, she disclosed that she had divorced him. Eddy provided further details below.

Eddy: ...the second time she came with my sons and she pretty much told me that she divorced me and she can't deal with my sons no more and left my sons with me...

Interviewer: Wow...mmm...mmm...mmm...mmm...Sorry to hear about that man...

Eddy: Well, I'm not. It made me try to figure out some stuff quickly.

Interviewer: ...Yeah...yeah...

Eddy: I've had my sons in my life since '08. You know... I've had full custody over them now for a few more years. I've had them in my custody for about 9 years maybe 10....

Other fathers demonstrated responsibility and commitment to their children by taking responsibility for their actions, communicating honestly to their children in letters,

and sending gifts and cards to reassure them that they still cared for them and wanted to be a part of their lives. Below are a few examples of fathers who demonstrated these values.

Randy: It made me realize that I was a big problem. That me not being there created some of their personal problems, and financial problems, and things of that nature. So, it gave me the attitude that once I was released, I would never allow this to happen again.

Payton: Well what I tried to do when I thought that they were getting the letters was I was always trying to be honest with my kids you know I would always let them know, that I screwed up....and ahmm...you know that that it happens...you know people make mistakes....not to justify anything like that or anything.. but to show them that you know, daddy makes mistakes too...

Beau: “I would buy things from the prison store snacks and what have you... and mail them to them just to remind them that I was still there and that I'm still a part of their lives and give them some excitement to have while I was away...

Thus, as fathers went through these transitional periods, they experienced growth in the level of commitment and responsibility they demonstrated to their children during these difficult periods. This was evident through the perceived honesty, involvement, and commitment to their responsibilities as fathers as shared by participants.

Emotional Maturity

For the most part, participants seemed to have also grown in the ways in which they were able to recognize and deal with their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. The emotions experienced by participants varied and included sadness, fear, hurt, joy, hopelessness, and happiness. They were further categorized as anger, excitement, anxiety, and vulnerability. Recognizing these emotions in themselves, as well as in their relationships, were critical to the level of success experienced by participants as they reintegrated with their children. Below are examples of some of participants' experiences as they navigated these emotions.

Anger

Anger was a prominent emotion that was perceived by participants. It manifested itself in the hurts, upsets, sadness, hatred, bitterness, and frustrations as shared and perceived by fathers in their relationships. Beau shared that because of his incarceration, the emotional experiences of his children affected the entire family. Beau explained:

Beau: They were upset with their mother initially, but then again, they were upset with me because, had I not put myself in that situation then they wouldn't be in the situation that they were in, so... It kind of made everyone uncomfortable and upset.

For Lovelle, who was asked about the thoughts he had regarding his daughter's feelings about his incarceration, he had this to say: *"I knew she was upset and hurt. So it was hard talking to her while I was incarcerated...Ahhmmm... You know, it was hard at first not knowing when I was coming home."* Similarly, Andre said, *"I was stressed out because I knew that my oldest son at that time period hated my guts and didn't want anything to do with me. He refused to talk to me on the telephone, so did my daughter."*

For Oliver who realized the impact that incarceration had on his daughter, he explained:

Oliver: My daughter was really frustrated and angry at me because of the void and all of that and we didn't begin to talk and build a relationship until I came home because there was a lot of... And that was when I began to realize the pain I brought on my children because of my incarceration.

From an intrapersonal perspective, Don also shared his own experience in dealing with anger. He recalled:

Don: "It was like.... you know... prison...made me adapt, made me control my anger. You know I have an anger issue, you know what I'm saying?"

Interviewer: mmm...mmm...

Don: I didn't care at that time because of the life that I grew up in. If somebody did something to me, it was either them or me. So, I was more quick-tempered. Now I'm more mellowed laid back... you know. And I think before I make a move...you know. Being in prison make you think. It makes you think before you

make any sudden move now. That's what prison has done for me, it's opened my eyes to make me think.

As noted by these participants, anger was a predominant emotion that family members experienced as fathers sought reintegration with their children. Anger manifested itself among participants and their children during these difficult periods. Even though anger had rippling effects on relationships, it allowed for participants, their children, and family members to grow throughout the process.

Anxiety

In addition to the varied levels of anger perceived by fathers in their relationships, they were also able to appreciate the anxiety that came with these experiences. Anxiety seemed to be evident based on the level of apprehension, panic, stress, worry, and strain that participants endured. These emotions were experienced differently and at different times by participants. As Payton and Fred thought about reintegrating with their children, being fearful and worried about what was going to happen, were the predominant concerns these fathers had. Below, they shared their experiences.

Payton: My thought...I was ...I was very fearful of what was to come. Ahm, what and how they would act, what my next step should be, where I should go...I had no direction to where...what I should do...so....(pause)...I was just fearful of the unknown but I was pretty motivated to make sure I was able to go to the court and at least try to get my visitation back...you know...?

Fred: I wasn't worried about my relationship with my kids, I was worried about a job. I was worried about how I was going to stay out and provide for my family. But as far as my kids, I wasn't worried about how that would be. Because they are my kids.

Keith also shared how nervous he was at the thought of reconnecting with his son. He explained, *"I was extremely nervous and extremely anxious...Ahm... though I have seen*

him a little bit in times when she did brought him to visit, you know....ahm.... I really haven't spend any quality time with just him and I."

For Eddy, it was somewhat different. During his incarceration, his kids were living between different caregivers. Upon his release, Eddy found out that his children were dislocated because of broken relationships between them and their caregivers. As a result, Eddy became anxious because he was unaware of where they were. During the interview, Eddy disclosed:

Eddy: Immediately after being released, it was panic mode because at first I didn't know where my boys were and my daughter was in Children and Family Services and I needed to figure out what I was going to do...I tried to pick up my girls from my grandmother's house, they let me know my grandmother passed away I had no clue.

Excitement

As fathers thought about reconnecting with their children, they were also able to identify and describe the level of excitement that was associated with the process. Prior to his release, Greg disclosed:

Greg: I felt like I was being myself. I wasn't really paying too much attention to what was going on in prison. Of course, I watched my surroundings and did my best to survive. But I was actually excited to get out of there and reconnect one day at a time... however long it was going to take I was going to reconnect with my children no matter what because I had set my mind to it.

For Blake, it was *"a jubilant and a happy reunion."* Gordon said, *"I was just excited about being able to know what their reaction was going to be...thinking there was going to be a lot of screaming you know?"* Keith shared that, *"Immediately after release, it was a really happy and a good time."*

On the contrary, Rupert and Victor had mixed emotions. When asked about how he felt as he thought about reconnecting with his daughter, Victor, despite being

apprehensive about his future, acknowledged the various emotions that characterized his experience. Among those emotions, he admitted that he was also excited, as seen below.

Interviewer: So, as you thought about getting out, what kind of feelings did you experience during that time?

Victor: Anxious and a bit excited just to see her and be with her...anxious, excited and a little bit also...ahm... just not knowing what was gonna really happen after uncertainty about what I was really going to do...

Rupert thought that his children's mother would be unreceptive. As a result, he was scared, anxious, and nervous but realized later that they were all excited to see him. He described his experience below.

Rupert: But I was anxious, I was nervous, I was scared, I was afraid that she was going to call the cops again. I didn't know what to think...To my surprise, I came out and after I knocked on that door, they opened it. Right? And even the mother was happy to see me. Which that, in my mind, it was over. But she welcomed me back.

As noticed in the aforementioned examples, these participants seemed to have had mixed emotions as they sought to reconnect with their children after incarceration. Notwithstanding, based on the reception that these fathers received from their children and their children's mothers, they were able to experience some level of success as they reconnected with their children.

Vulnerability

As seen in the examples above, fathers were willing and opened to share the different emotions they experienced during their reintegration process. By so doing, they made themselves emotionally vulnerable. Notwithstanding, these emotions were not limited to anger, excitement, and anxiety, but included pent up feelings of hopelessness,

powerlessness, shamefulness, mental anguish, and sometimes a sense of void. These emotions occurred before, during, and after periods of incarceration.

For fathers like Greg, Blake, and Beau who knew that they were going to be incarcerated and would have had limited contact with their children, they recalled their emotional vulnerability as follows.

Greg: It made me feel ugly inside because at one point they see me going into jail. They saw me being thrown in the cop's car...

Blake: At first I was ashamed, and I didn't want my wife to visit with the children at the jail. To know that their dad is in jail. But then after a while they grew up and at a certain age, it couldn't be hid...so I was ashamed of it.

Beau: So that was bothersome to me. So it was more of a mental anguish than it was... ahm... the actual thought of being in jail. It was more so the concern that I had for them and what would they have to endure while I was gone...

During periods of incarceration, fathers also had other experiences. Victor expressed hopelessness because he could only talk to his daughter, but not see her.

Victor: I felt really bad. I felt hopeless, powerless, I was really sad that I couldn't be there with her because of what I had done. I felt really sad, I felt really sad, I felt pretty hopeless I couldn't do anything, at the time there's nothing you can do. All you can do is just talk but ahm... I felt really bad that through my choices I put her through that situation that she did not have her father with her because of what I had done.

Eddy elaborated on the physical abuse he endured due to his vulnerability as well as the strain and stress that was associated with his experience.

Eddy: Most people never really understand the stress, the strain, that incarceration does or is for a person... You talk about everyday somebody touching you, rubbing their hand over your body to see if you have something. If that's not enough, they are continually stripping you, if you don't submit to their will or their beckon call they tend to abuse you and torture you and beat you. And if that's not enough, if they feel that you are a problem or a troublemaker, ahhh...they have two methods to deal with people, one - they put you in a cell or a place where someone doesn't like you for who you are or what color you are...And if that's not enough they stick you in isolation...You're stuck in a room all 24 hour of the day....

For Rupert, despite the “heartless” image he presented to his peers, he was not afraid to disclose his emotions especially when he thought about his kids. Rupert recalled:

Rupert: So, you know there were times when even though I carried myself a certain way and my image may not portray of somebody with a heart, I’m a very emotional person so when I would think about my kids, you know, I wouldn’t care if there were a hundred killers in there...I would cry if I have to cry.

Rupert’s unrestrained emotions were also evident during the interview as he recalled and shared his post-incarceration experience with his son. In his experience with his son, he promised his son that when his son started community college, they would both enroll together, and he would challenge his son in the subjects they took. Rupert viewed this as a mentoring moment for him, which he regarded as a “blessing.” While sharing his experience, Rupert welled up in tears and reacted to the experience as a moment of therapy for him.

Rupert: All I can say is that I've been blessed all my life. Even though I don't have much, having my kids... (*participant pauses and wells up in tears*)...is a blessing...

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah...Well...(*Interviewer pauses and allows participant to process emotions, while searching for words to encourage participant*)... Your kids are there and are supportive and everything. And the ability to be there and to reconnect with them, is a blessing.

Rupert: Yeah. It’s good and it keeps me going. You see what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, I definitely sympathize with you with what you're going through, and I appreciate what you shared with me and I would like to encourage you to continue to be the father that you are and to continue to shower your children with love just as how your parents did the same for you. Just talking to you, I realize that you have a passion for them (your kids), in just wanting to reach out to connect and to do the best you can for them even though you don't have much materially. So, I would just like to encourage you to continue to keep on doing what you're doing.

Rupert: I appreciate that man. It was actually a therapy for me, being able to release all that, you know what I mean...because sometimes we hold stuff...even though it’s not a bad thing. But, it feels, I felt good...

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Rupert: Me, crying a little. That helped me. Get me? So that’s a good thing.

Thus, as participants negotiated their relationships with their children during different transitional periods, it is evident from the aforementioned examples that fathers experienced a range of emotional vulnerability. This was typical for most participants in the study.

Spirituality

Of the total number of fathers interviewed in the study, almost fifty percent of respondents attributed their level of success to their spiritual growth. This was noticeable by the amount of unsolicited “God talk” or “religious talk” that participants identified with their experiences. Some of these experiences happened while participants were incarcerated, while others transpired after incarceration. For example, prior to getting out, Solomon shared insights on some of the conversations that he and his fellow inmates had in prison.

Solomon: Well. This last time around, I basically talked about the fact that I wasn't going to be drinking and smoking weed, and cigarettes and I had plans to kind of get my life together in its entirety. Go to church, find me a church, stay focused with Christ and just be a God-fearing man first and then go from there. It's a lot of conversation that I had prior to my release which played a big part in my success now...

Other fathers like Payton, Greg, and Blake, credited their transformation to the faith they had in God in allowing him to control and transform their lives.

Payton: ...And I don't want to get...let it sound too religious...but I ...I can only thank God for what he has done in my life and the transformation and the restoration that he has done in my life so far...just this past 3 years...

Greg: And I know God knows what he's doing. God knows what he's doing. I've just got to try to stop driving and sit in the back and let God do his thing.

Blake: Well just the Lord Jesus Christ is credited with anything positive that comes out of this negative situation.

In the case of Andrew (a father who was unsuccessful in reconnecting with his children after his release), he perceived that God gave him a vision to start a reentry organization so that he could reach out to men like himself. As Andrew reflected on his experience, he deemed his experience as a ministry and an opportunity that God gave to him so that he could establish a level of stability, as well as be of service to others. Below, Andrew provided details of his experience.

Andrew: I just appreciate you giving me the opportunity to help you and that's what I live to do today, to be of service and a servant of the Most High God...That's my own desire because he's giving me so much that... and he's still preparing me for that which I've seen through the vision of faith...I've seen it. I heard him loud and clear. He's showing to the full together what he told me.

Interviewer: mmm...mmm...

Andrew: Nine years ago, when he spoke to me about starting XX Reentry Program, I never knew that he was not gonna let me not get another job but that he was gonna create a ministry that was going to afford me a lifestyle of stability against the odds of an unforgiving society and my God did that for me....

In summary, as fathers reintegrated with their children, they experienced personal growth at different levels. For most fathers, being able to mature in different areas seemed to be a valuable experience to them. This was demonstrated at different times in their experiences, as well as in a variety of ways. For fathers in this study, personal growth was demonstrated via means of the new perspective they had as fathers, their commitment and responsibility to fatherhood, their emotional maturity, and their evolving spirituality.

Support

Similar to the value placed on their personal growth as fathers, participants also recognized and appreciated the different levels of support received during their reintegration experiences. Support to fathers during these periods came in different forms. The two main levels of support came from participants' families and communities. To a lesser extent, some participants attributed support to government institutions. In the subsequent paragraphs, more details will be provided on the levels of support that participants received from these sources.

Family Support

The main source of support that participants received for themselves and their children during different transitional periods was support from families. Support from families came in different forms. One form of support was in the area of visitation during periods of incarceration. Keith for example, received visitation from his son, which was facilitated by his son's mother. Keith shared: *"And when I got to prison, I was able to speak with him more over the phone and his mother pretty regularly brought him to visit me."* For Fed, support through visitation came from his own mom whom he said, *"if my mom could bring four kids at the time, she would bring them."*

Moreover, fathers also received support in the form of their children's mothers or other caregivers who protected their children from the knowledge of their fathers' incarceration. This was observed in at least three participants who shared their experiences below.

Gordon: You know it's kind of strange because we never really told them. They knew that I was gone but they didn't know where I was gone to... you know...

especially the younger two they were like 2 and 6 so I think my wife had them think that I was away at a job or school or something...Cuz we never brought them to see me while I was away locked up...

Don: You have some woman they just don't care, they tell them.... Lucky for me, my son's mother was a correctional officer. She didn't tell him I was in jail like that, you know... So that was good for me you know.

Justin: Well, I actually got a letter from the oldest one and up on to that point, me and my mother would lie to him. We would tell him that whenever I got locked up I went back to Ohio to work. Or I was off working in somewhere.

Families also provided support to fathers through different resources. Resources from families were extended to participants' children, as well as fathers themselves, during these transitional periods. Resources were provided in the form of transportation, finances, or accommodation. For Lovelle, his brother and sister-in-law provided transportation, while his business partner provided financial resources.

Lovelle: Well, my brother helped out. He took her to school and stuff...the times when her mom couldn't and stuff, he was able to pick her up from school and helped support when I was away. My brother and my brother's wife helped pick up the pieces there. You know ahm... my business partner helped in providing financial help so that she could keep on going to the same school she was going to...So, it wasn't a disruption there...So, you know the business was good so...

Victor, another father, shared that he got support from his mom through accommodation after his incarceration. In addition, his mom also provided transportation for job interviews.

Victor: Ahhm... I didn't really get too much support, it was basically me. And I got some support from my mother.

Interviewer: What kind of support did you get from your mom?

Victor: She was where I went to stay when I was released and the support she gave me was just helping me get a job... And she would give me a ride to job interviews.

Thus, the support provided to participants and their children by family members during these difficult periods, were also instrumental to fathers' positive reintegration experiences.

Community Support

Similar to support received from family members, participants also valued the support received from their communities. Community support came from various sources and at different times during participants' transitions. For example, prior to Lovelle's release from prison, a reentry organization that focused on preparing prisoners for reentry with their kids, facilitated a program called Malachi Dads with incarcerated fathers. During the process, Lovelle and other men like himself were able to make physical contact with their children prior to their release from prison. When asked about his experience and any support he received during his incarceration, Lovelle shared:

Lovelle: Yeah. Malachi Dads helped. There was a time when she actually got to see me without being behind the window. So...

Interviewer: mmm...mmm...And it was through Malachi Dads, that program?

Lovelle: Yeah. Yeah. The Malachi Dads program is really good about that.

Additional support to fathers came from organizations, which focused on gang intervention, reentry, fatherhood, spiritual care, and alcohol anonymous programs. Three participants - Rupert, Justin, and Greg, shared how much they valued and appreciated the services of their community's gang intervention and reintegration organization. This organization provided employment and other services to them, which resulted in their personal development as fathers and a positive reintegration experience with their children.

Rupert: If it wasn't for this institution here (XXX), I'm going to keep it real. A lot of people will boast and say whatever they want. But I want to keep it real, if it wasn't for this place here, I wouldn't have gotten custody for my kids.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, you said that this institution helped you. In what ways? Give me some tangible ways.

Rupert: Money. Being able to leave to take my kids to the doctor when I got custody of them, ahm or something happened to them at school and they get sick or whatever. I could leave and I still get paid instead of worrying about, "Oh my God my kid is sick! I've got to take them to the doctor! I'm going to miss out on my paycheck!"

Interviewer: ...mmm...mmm...

Rupert: They don't allow that to happen. They want you to take care of your situation so that you can better yourself.

Justin: Now. I get so much support man. Things are like great. There are so many examples of great fathers, from classes here, project fatherhood, I did the training with classes that were offered here, and then a training now I can actually facilitate project fatherhood meetings.

Greg: So, I came here and took advantage of all the services that they have here - parenting classes, anger management, project fatherhood, ahm substance abuse, therapy. It's a good support system...

Other participants such as Gordon, Oliver, and Keith, benefited from churches and other programs in their communities (e.g. Alcohol Anonymous), which offered teaching and mentoring services. As a result of these services, participants were able to experience personal growth as well as stability during these critical periods. Gordon, Oliver, and Keith shared their experiences below.

Gordon: ...You know being at the church and hearing other men of God explaining what the pattern and teaching on those things, that really helped to Give some type of stability and direction.

Oliver: The mens in the church that has the void in me...I have never seen what a father look like... the younger mens I think...I am 10, 15 year older than Pastor Sam but seeing him with his daughters...he has 3 daughters....seeing him how he raises his daughters and seeing other mens in the church the way they raise their kids...I was beginning to see. Now these guys were getting up to work doing the things what fathers do you know what I mean? Going to some of the kids basketball game, baseball games. It helped me to really understand some of the voids and why my kids felt the way they felt...

Keith: Most of all the good traits that I have as a dad, I have learned in Alcohol Anonymous from other men that got sober and are sober father's today. And I really grown up, as a person and as a father in AA. Today I have over 10 years sobriety and I'm very active in AA and I speak a lot and people want to hear my story and other men that came before me taught me how to be a good dad, a real dad.

Based on the experiences of the aforementioned fathers as well as other fathers in the study, support from different organizations within participants' communities played a crucial role in their reintegration experiences. Thus, community support seemed to have been a valuable resource as participants sought reintegration with their children.

Government Support

Whereas participants could readily identify family members or community programs that provided some level of support during their experiences, support received from government or other statutory institutions seemed to be sparse. Furthermore, when government provided programs similar to those provided by private organizations (such as parenting or anger management classes), participants did not seem to appreciate these programs as much as how they appreciated programs provided by community organizations. One father who goes by the pseudonym Andre, shared that support was provided through fathering classes that was offered in the prison. However, he didn't seem to value the context in which the program was offered because it was in a "custody situation."

Andre: The program that they had was a fathering class and it was a three-month situation, that you got a certificate for, for being a good parent, they taught you a parenting class and that's what they offered you. They offered you a stabled 3-month parenting class, and now, what you're dealing with is re-educating yourself, but in a custody situation.

Andrew, another father, who started a men's auxiliary group while incarcerated, seemed to share similar sentiments. He believed that the institution allowed him to start the men's group because it would benefit the institution itself, and not necessarily the inmates.

Below is an excerpt of the interview with Andrew.

Interviewer: What about the program you started in the institution, did you get any support in any way in running the program?

Andrew: Well I got support in the fact that they allowed me to do it because it lessened their...ahm, it made the culture of the prison better and it cut back a lot of nonsense of the guys being frustrated from off the street and bringing their frustrations into the culture of the cell blocks, so that's the only reason why they allowed me to do it because it helped them. It wasn't because they wanted to help us and they surely explained that - they made that clear. "This isn't about you," "we ain't care about you," "you're all criminals." "But if you all want to start your own stuff, at the same time we're going to take the benefit that's helping us" - less prison guards getting hurt, and less of you guys getting hurt, and that's how they saw it.

Similarly, Don said they offered classes, but he was averse to the setting. Don disclosed:

Don: Yeah. I mean I had to go to class while I was in there too so there was always discussions about things as far as parenting and being there for your kids but me as a person, I always knew what it was like. I really don't like discussions about my family with other inmates that I don't know because...

For Fred and Lovelle, their despair was over the lack of support they received so that they could communicate with their children.

Fred: Sometimes I would be laying there in my cell...Sometimes I would be worried about, are they okay or sometimes they would have a lock down for 6 to 7 months and you can't get on the phone, but you can get a letter three weeks later. But that doesn't tell you like...if your son is in the hospital or you know...

Lovelle: The prison, the government, the state makes it really difficult. I mean between the amount that it cost to call and just ahm...especially being in LA County, the visitation was ridiculous. You know...So they make it really difficult on you. ...The system is really messed up...

Upon their release from prison, a number of fathers lamented the level of financial support received from the government, especially knowing that their chances of being employed was reduced due to their criminal history.

Andre: We have these people that have been incarcerated and when we get out you give us \$250 and stick us back in the same situation, the same neighborhood that we got out of and you asked us not to do anything illegal again and not to go back to the same old crime. But you didn't even give us enough money to get a hotel room for a week.

Victor: And they also provided \$200 when you are released so you can travel back home to where you were going to stay with a little bit of money to help you.

All in all, it was evident from fathers that during these transitional periods, minimal support was received from the government. Although support was perceived as inadequate, fathers improvised with what they received since they did not have much control over what was being offered.

Resources

Of all the values espoused by fathers during their reintegration experiences, the one which seemed to be the most highly esteemed, yet elusive, was fathers' ability to provide for their children. This was a significant theme for most fathers especially immediately after their release from penal institutions. Furthermore, this theme manifested itself in the form of Father' inclination towards employment and academic advancement. As seen in the experiences of some of these participants, any advancement in either of these areas, seemed to put fathers in better positions to take care of themselves, and also to contribute tangibly in the lives of their children.

Employment

For most of the fathers interviewed in the study, readjustment to society and reintegration into their children's lives was a difficult process. One of the main challenges that these men faced was lack of financial resources to take care of themselves and their families. Fathers such as Fred and Victor, expressed the financial and job constraints they faced as they reintegrated with their children.

Fred: I wasn't worried about my relationship with my kids, I was worried about a job. I was worried about how I was going to stay out and provide for my family. But as far as my kids, I wasn't worried about how that would be. Because they are my kids.

Victor: What didn't help was not being able to provide any type of financial support. Not being able to provide anything because upon my release I didn't have a job, no money so I couldn't do nothing for her. I couldn't go really and take her out. Ahm...I mean I spend time with her but not being able to provide. And not having any transportation was really hard to spend time with her.

What complicated matters further, was the difficulty fathers faced from organizations that refused to employ felons. Andre, one of the fathers in the study, articulated his post-incarceration dilemma quite eloquently.

Andre: If we were doing bad, before we went to prison and we were making it and alive and surviving through negative activities. What makes you think that you're gonna stick us in prison, take away everything that we had before when we were out of prison, and then put us back into society supposedly fixed, readjusted and rehabilitated, and only give us \$250, and say okay well now go out there and find a job, a place to stay, transportation. But don't forget that when they take you to the bus station, \$150 of that \$250 that they just gave you of gate money, is going for bus ticket to get you where you're going. So, now you only have \$100, and it cost \$10 just to eat in one meal...Okay, so I either have 10 meals and I sleep out there in a cardboard box, or I take that \$100 and I go out there and I buy myself a chain or a dope and I swing that and double it up, and take that money and double it up, and take that money and double it up or here again I'm committing crimes.

Although most fathers in the study experienced difficulties in finding employment, a few fathers were a little more fortunate. Keith, for example who had previous work experiences as well as a master's degree prior to his incarceration, regarded himself as being at an advantage when compared to his contemporaries.

Keith: And then you know of course, after you are released from prison, I had a little bit of advantage because I had some education behind me, and I have a lot of work experience behind me but it's quite difficult to get a decent job to begin your life again. You were on the problem of having a felony and nobody wants to hire a felon, you know and it's not easy. And fortunately, for some reason God gave me the will to start at the bottom and I worked my way up to the top of this company and ahm...but it's been a process.

Rupert, another father, who was employed by his community's gang intervention and reentry organization, expressed his appreciation for the financial support given to him during his reintegration experience.

Rupert: Being able to leave to take my kids to the doctor when I got custody of them, ahm...or something happened to them at school and they get sick or whatever. I could leave and I still get paid instead of worrying about, "Oh my God my kid is sick! I've got to take them to the doctor! I'm going to miss out on my paycheck!"

All in all, it was clear that fathers in this study placed a high value on their abilities to provide for themselves and their children's financial needs, post their incarceration. Even though most fathers faced challenges in finding jobs, the few that were able to do so appreciated their employers for the support given to them during this transitional period. This resulted in positive reintegration experiences between fathers and their children.

Academic Advancement

In addition to the value placed on their abilities to be employed, a number of fathers also esteemed and embraced the prospect of academic advancement. This seemed to be an essential element for both their personal development, as well as the advancement of others, including their children. Rupert, one of the fathers in the study, recognized the need to exemplify industry and academic advancement as a means by which he could mentor his children. As a result, in addition to maintaining his current job, he planned on registering in school so that he could inspire his children to do likewise. When asked what it would take for him to have a better relationship with his children, Rupert shared the excitement and challenge that was involved in the process of mentoring his son in his academic development.

Rupert: I think right now it's important for them to see that I'm willing not just to work but maybe continue with some sort of education which I did enroll in college...And my son, my 15-year-old is very excited about that cuz thank God he is a very smart kid...He's a A & B student, he's doing pretty good. So, for him it's like a challenge. So, for him, what he wants to do, because he is taking up...his High School they offer college classes. So now he wants to compete with me. So that pushes me to want to do better and to be better than him in a way, so that he could be challenged and be better than that.

Randy, another father in the study, recognized the importance of establishing some level of balance in advancing himself, while maintaining his relationship with his daughter. Randy shared that after his release from prison, he went through a period of instability. This made it difficult for him to spend as much time as he would have liked with his daughter. Randy further explained that while trying to make academic strides, he found it challenging to balance going to school with work, and spending time with his daughter.

Randy: I think, treating her like a baby and not being stable ahm... you know when you first get out you have to get yourself together, you have to get a job, you have to go back to school, do the things you need to do to get settled. And that kinda took precedence in my life versus her and I had to learn to balance it... To give her a quality time as well as go to school and go to work and do the things that I needed to do to be a good father.

Two other fathers who appreciated the prospect of advancing themselves academically, while helping their children and other fathers like themselves, also shared their experiences. Andre, the first of these fathers who was working on his doctorate in psychology, shared some of the challenges he faced in gaining employment so that he could provide for himself and his kids. In addition, Andre provided details about his academic trajectory.

Andre: And I want them (*referring to his children*) to be happy. I would like to be able to get them clothes, you know what I'm saying? And I understand that I have to work to get there, but if I can't get a job because I'm a felon, how am I supposed to work?... These are serious things that a lot of people don't contemplate, as it is it is so difficult and you know when I consider myself, I thank God and I thank him all the time that I'm able to pull myself out of them buckets... And I'm one of the crabs that crawled out... cuz I'm going to school. I need 43 more credits, 43 more units and I have a bachelor's degree I have a 4.0 GPA, my cumulative GPA is a 3.950. I have one B and all the rest As ... You know what I'm saying? I have a stupid high GPA !!... And I'm taking some seriously hardcore classes, like Calculus 1, Calculus 2, Calculus 3, Linear Algebra, you know what I'm saying? ... I'm taking some hard-core mathematics. I'm taking some hardcore Physics classes and Chemistry classes. You know what I'm saying? So, I'm not doing easy classes and getting good grades, I'm doing hard classes and getting good grades.

Ralph, the other father, who expressed an interest in this present study, disclosed that after his release from prison, he advanced himself academically by getting a masters. For his master's project, Ralph created a communication guide for ex-offenders with the aim of helping them communicate effectively. Below is an excerpt of the interview with Ralph, which provides further details.

Ralph: Well I'd like to share that I do also carry a vested interest in your research. Because that is also something similar to that which I also did for my master's research. Can I share that?

Interviewer: Oh...What did you do for your master's project?

Ralph: What I did for my master's project was that I created a communication guide for ex-offenders.

Interviewer: Oh, ok.

Ralph: So, what you're actually doing I'm very interested to know what becomes of your research because at least on the communication...as far as I understand, nobody has ever done what I have done.

Although most fathers in the study participated in various classes (such as parenting, anger management, substance abuse, and fatherhood classes) and programs during and after periods of incarceration, a number of participants opted to advance themselves academically. As a result of these men's academic development, they were able to mentor and foster the growth of previously incarcerated men, as well as their children.

Discussion

Previous studies reveal that the rate at which prisoners are being incarcerated and released from state and federal prisons back into the community, has been a serious cause for concern among various stakeholders (Anderson-Facile, 2009; MacDonald, 2013; Raphael, 2011; Wright et al., 2013). Of the 700,000 prisoners that are released back into society, ninety percent (90%) are fathers (Anderson-Facile, 2009). Since fathers play significant roles in the lives of their children (Blankenhorn, 1995; Carlson, 2006; Cook, 2015; Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Nease & Austin, 2010; Samuel, 2016; Snarey, 1993), exploring the experiences that these men have as they reintegrate with their children is significant for two primary reasons. Firstly, results will provide stakeholders with an understanding of the experiences that these fathers go through so as to better serve them

and their families. Secondly, the themes that evolved from the grounded theory process, provides researchers and practitioners with a useful framework to better serve these men, their families, and their communities.

As noted previously, this grounded theory study was designed to examine the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers within Southern California. In order to understand the experiences of these men, the researcher utilized a set of open-ended questions that captured the essence of fathers' relationship experiences with their children during different transitional periods. From a theoretical perspective, two conceptual questions were utilized as instruments to guide this study. The questions utilized were how do fathers experience reintegration with their children after incarceration, and what were some of the factors that enhanced or hindered their reintegration experiences. In addition, to further explore the experiences of participants, three overarching methodological questions were used to elicit participants' perception of their reintegration experiences with their children. The questions utilized were: What were your experiences with your child (children) like prior to being incarcerated? During your period of incarceration, how did you experience your relationship with your child (children)? Since you've been released, what has your experience with your child (children) been like? These questions were followed up with a set of open-ended questions that captured the essence of fathers' relationship experiences with their children before, during, and after incarceration. Three major themes and eight sub-themes emerged from the grounded theory process that explained fathers' reintegration experiences. The three overarching themes were: participants' ideology of fatherhood, nodal events, and evolving fatherhood values.

Overall, findings from this study revealed that the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers can be a challenging process. On one hand, these men had to clarify and identify their ideologies of fatherhood (a theme that is consistent with previous literature on fatherhood (Robb, 2003)), while working through their shortcomings as they evolved in their paternal roles. During the process, fathers clarified their ideologies of fatherhood through the varied definitions they ascribed to father, their early experiences with their fathers, as well as their experiences as fathers to their own children. On the other hand however, fathers also had to negotiate the relationships (nodal events) they had with their children, as well as some of their children's caregivers during these transitional periods. These nodal events were shaped by the broken or developing relationships that they had with their children and their children's caregivers. This is supported by prior studies on fathers who share similar experiences during and after periods of incarceration (Geller, 2013; Muth & Walker, 2013).

In addition, as fathers reconnected with their children through these periods, they seemed to value the level of support received from their families and communities, and to a lesser extent, the government (evolving values). This was a significant part of their reintegration experiences since previous studies have found that support from different stakeholders enhanced positive experiences for this population (Fox, 2012; Martinez, 2006; Spjeldnes et al., 2012). Furthermore, as fathers embraced their newly developed values, it was critical for them to position themselves with the necessary resources to take care of themselves and their children. In this study, resources came in the form of employment and their abilities to advance academically. Although prior scholarship varies in the correlation between employment and recidivism rates (Moses, 2012; J. M. L.

Nally, Susan ; Ho, Taiping ; Knutson, Katie 2014), this present study revealed that resources in the form of employment, was instrumental in these men's reintegration experiences. Furthermore, fathers' abilities to advance themselves academically, enhanced their relationship experiences with their children.

All in all, this present study revealed that the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers within the region of Southern California, is a complex and dynamic process. In that, any level of success experienced by these men was as a result of various factors. These included how well fathers were able to transition into paternal roles, their abilities to negotiate their relationships with their children and their children's caregivers, and how well they were able to negotiate and balance their newly espoused values. These were factors which influenced the level of success they experienced as they sought to reconnect with their children after incarceration.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had a number of strengths and limitations. The first notable strength was the method by which data were collected. Data were collected through open-ended in-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews. During the data collection process, participants provided rich description of events and processes (as illustrated by quotations in the study), which substantiated the phenomenon being explored. Similarly, through purposive sampling, the researcher obtained theoretical saturation at the tenth interview. Even though an additional nine participants were interviewed to substantiate previous findings, this was unnecessary because additional interviews did not provide fresh insight on the phenomenon being explored. Additionally, the use of grounded theory methodology

was another strength of the present study. Through the grounded theory process, the researcher was able to develop thematic categories, which provide a theoretical basis for which ongoing research can be conducted.

Despite the aforementioned strengths, there were a number of weaknesses, which were evident in the study. Participants were recruited from seven different locations using purposive sampling. The use of this sampling method was adapted during the research process, because the proposed method (snowball sampling), was unable to generate participants for the study. In addition, due to the use of this sampling method and the different locations from which participants were recruited, the ability to perform theoretical sampling was precluded. Another limitation to the study was the subjective process of gathering information from participants for the study. Even though participants provided primary data from which themes emerged, the researcher had to take participants' words at face value. Further studies should corroborate information from participants with participants' children, caregivers, and focus groups, participants, so that triangulation of data can take place.

Finally, as with all qualitative studies, the information generated from the present research is beneficial to the context in which the study was done. Hence, no generalization should be made from the study. Nevertheless, the results provide stakeholders within this context insights into the perceived experiences of these men. Furthermore, results from this study are useful for comparative reasons with other qualitative studies in other geographic locations.

Implications for Theory

The present study utilized grounded theory as the methodology of choice for understanding the perceived experiences of post-incarcerated fathers as they transitioned from prison to paternal roles. While utilizing grounded theory, three major themes emerged from the data namely: participants' ideology of fatherhood, nodal events, and evolving fatherhood values. The emerging themes can serve many functions for ongoing research on post-incarcerated fathers and their children. One such function is to provide theoretical guidance. Through this process, future studies can be tested against emerging themes so that confidence can be established and themes can be further developed into theories.

Similarly, another important function that the emerging themes from the present study provides is that of interpretation. In this regard, emerging themes can help researchers to make sense of how the phenomenon being covered operate (White & Klein, 2015). Furthermore, through the use of interpretation, researchers are able to give a good description of the subject matter being explored. This in effect can provide a plausible picture or evoke stories about how things work (White & Klein, 2015).

Explanation also acts as another significant implication of emerging theories from the present study. These explanations are dependent on the data and the resulting findings that emerged during the research process. Through theoretical findings, the why and how of fathers' reintegration experiences is better explained. In effect, the connecting experiences and events in post-incarcerated fathers' lives, have been derived from more general statements, which suggests that the phenomena between them have been explained (White & Klein, 2015).

Implications for Practice and Research

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory was the framework utilized in this study to understand the experiences of post-incarcerated fathers. This is a useful lens through which various stakeholders can understand the experiences of fathers as they seek to reintegrate with their children. In light of findings from the present study, a number of implications emerged. The first implication from the study is that the ecological theory provides and sensitizes family life practitioners and other stakeholders, about the multiple levels and various interactions among and between various ecological units (Westney, 1993). In the case of post-incarcerated fathers who are desirous of interacting or re-engaging with their children, community-based or neighborhood programs can be so structured that children and partners are prepared through various education programs, on how to interact and relate to ex-offending fathers after their release from prison. Similarly, other stakeholders such as government can be influenced to enact policies regarding healthcare and employment so that post-incarcerated fathers are in a position to take care of their health and their children's well-being after incarceration.

Additionally, since the ecological theory is of such that it takes into account various ecosystems, an understanding and use of the theory in light of post-incarcerated fathers' experiences within the various ecosystems, is important for community organisers who are seeking to develop collaborative efforts between families and communities. This is not new to the field since practitioners such as Perkins, Ferrari, Covey, and Keith (2005), have successfully utilised the ecological theory to facilitate collaborative community efforts between children and families in specific communities .

Similarly, an understanding and utilisation of the ecological model can assist community organisers to do collaborative efforts within communities so that the challenges facing post-incarcerated fathers and their children can be minimized.

For research purposes, findings from this present study can provide a rationale for the exploration of various variables or factors within the ecosystem that affect the family as they adapt to changes within the family system (Westney, 1993). In this case, findings from the present study, can provide useful information and insight when proceeding to do further research on post-incarcerated fathers and their children. Additionally, the results are likely to set the stage for further research on factors that influence how post-incarcerated fathers and their children re-establish relationships after incarceration. Furthermore, because the family is inter-related in structure and function, it is useful to utilize findings to further explore how various environments within the system impact individuals, family development, and quality of life for individuals within the system (Westney, 1993).

Conclusion

This grounded theory study examined the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers. The model, which emerged from the study suggests that the reintegration experiences of these men is a dynamic process. In that, participants experiences were shaped by their ideology of fatherhood, their evolving fatherhood values, and their nodal events in fathering. Moreover, as fathers' experiences are viewed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, their interaction among the different layers within their ecosystems, are factors that either enhanced or hindered any

level of success that participants experienced as they reconnected with their children.

Results of this study will inform policy makers, family scientists, government, and families about the processes involved as post-incarcerated fathers make this transition back into the lives of their children and families, and experience satisfaction and wellbeing in so doing and also contribute to the wellbeing of their children. The provisions of policies and infrastructures may serve to facilitate a smoother transition for these men. The present study also offers important implications for theory development, practice, and research.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study revealed that the reintegration experiences for previously incarcerated fathers within various regions in Southern California, is a complex and dynamic process. As such, the grounded theory approach to qualitative study and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, were utilized as the theory and framework (respectively) through which these men's experiences could be understood. The former facilitated the emergence of themes grounded in the data collected from participants that helped to describe their experiences, while the latter provided an understanding of how previously incarcerated fathers adjusted and adapted to various facets of their environments. Findings from this study revealed that in an attempt to reconnect with their children after incarceration, the level of success or failure described and experienced by fathers depended on how well they were able to adjust to, and navigate through the various challenges they encountered within their ecosystems. These challenges ranged from their level of emotional and paternal growth at the micro level, to the level of relationship they had and how much support they received from various stakeholders at the macro level. When corroborated with themes that emerged from the grounded theory process, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) established ecological theory provided an additional vista through which these men's experiences could be further understood.

An Ecological Model of Father's Reintegration Experiences

As noted previously, the themes that emerged from the grounded theory process revealed that the reintegration experiences of formerly incarcerated fathers is a complex and dynamic process. In that, in order for fathers to have experienced any level of success in reintegrating with their children, they would have had to adjust and adapt to various challenges posed by their evolving ecosystems. In light of this fact, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) established ecological theory seemed to corroborate well with findings from the grounded theory process and provided a useful lens through which fathers' reintegration experiences could be further understood. In Figure 2 and also in subsequent paragraphs, fathers' experiences are illustrated and explained in light of themes that emerged from the grounded theory process, as well as fathers' ability to adapt through their micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono systems.

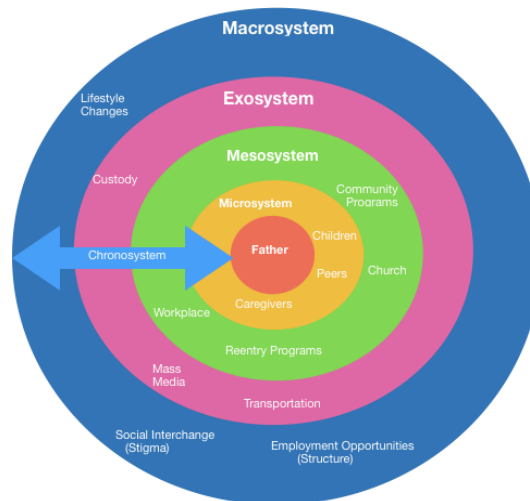


Figure 2: An Ecological Model of Father's Reintegration Experiences

The first noticeable aspect of the ecological model, which seemed to corroborate and support data that emerged from the study was the impact that fathers' microsystems

had on their reintegration experiences. Of significance, was the relationship experiences that fathers had with their children during different transitional periods. This was evident in how fathers were able to make both personal and interpersonal adjustments in their relationships during periods of incarceration, and after they were released from prison. During periods of incarceration for example, participants would typically write letters to their children so as to maintain their relationships with them. Below are notable examples.

Andre: *“I was probably able to talk with the two little ones, maybe once per month. I did send letters, and I received letters.”*

Blake: *“Yes that's what I'm talking about we wrote letters. I am incarcerated and they are out and I'm communicating to them with letters...”*

After incarceration, a number of participants also recognized the need to adjust themselves to the emotional hurt that their incarceration caused their children. A typical example was observed with Oliver who upon release from prison, recognized that in relating to his daughter, he had to allow her to process her emotions since he was the one who caused her to be hurting. Oliver disclosed: *“You have to allow them to be able to... express themselves...to go through their mad periods... go through what they go through because you hurt them.”* All in all, these pattern of relationship experiences was observed among some of the participants as they navigated their relationships during these transitional periods.

Upon release from prison, fathers faced the challenge of balancing themselves among the different areas of their environments in which they interact. This balancing act sometimes caused friction with other areas. As a result, fathers had to be careful in how they managed time spent in different areas within their mesosystem since neglecting one important area, could have negative consequences between them and their children.

Randy, one of the fathers in the study, expressed the typical challenge that he, and some other fathers faced as they tried to maintain balance within their mesosystem after incarceration.

Randy: I think, treating her like a baby and not being stable ahhmmm... you know when you first get out you have to get yourself together, you have to get a job, you have to go back to school, do the things you need to do to get settled. And that kinda took precedence in my life versus her and I had to learn to balance it To give her a quality time as well as go to school and go to work and do the things that I needed to do to be a good father.

Although some fathers faced varied challenges in balancing what goes on in their mesosystems, a few fathers were supported through some of the challenges they experienced. As a result, they were better able to maintain equilibrium in their lives.

Rupert was one such individual who received some level of support during his reintegration.

Rupert: Money...Being able to leave to take my kids to the doctor when I got custody of them, ahm or something happened to them at school and they get sick or whatever. I could leave and I still get paid instead of worrying about, "Oh my God, my kid is sick I've got to take them to the doctor, I'm going to miss out on my paycheck!"...They don't allow that to happen. They want you to take care of your situation so that you can better yourself.

In Rupert's case, his employer provided him with resources so that he could take time from his job to take care of his children when they became sick. During the process, Rupert did not have to worry about not getting paid because his employer supported his reintegration process.

In addition to participants' mesosystem, fathers' reintegration experiences were also impacted by what went on within their exosystem. Two areas where this was observed were through mass media and the legal system. For a few fathers in the study, mass media in the form of what was aired on television seemed to have had an integral

part on how fathers evolved in their ideology of fatherhood, as well as how their children related to them as fathers. One father who goes by the pseudonym Ralph, indicated that his early idea of what a father should be, emerged from his watching of the Cosby Show. Ralph stated, *“You know, in my growing up when I saw a show like The Cosby, to me that's what a father should be.”* Another father who goes by the pseudonym Lovelle, also perceived that mass media does have an effect on people. He thought that this was the case because of a question posed by his daughter during his post-incarceration experience with her. Below is an excerpt from the interview.

Lovelle: You know like the other day she texted me and asked me if I had ever been in a gang And I was like no!! And she was like, “you know you can be truthful with me.” And I was like “No! I've never been in a gang.”

Reflecting on the question posed by his daughter, Lovelle concluded:

Lovelle: You know, one thing that hurts is that TV sensationalizes a lot of things that goes on in prison so people will watch. You know... But they never show the people that are trying to make good of themselves and trying to do... Because they never show that aspect because no one will watch that... So, everyone gets a skewed vision of the people that are in prison, and the people that are trying to make better of themselves and just trying to do their time and get home.

In effect, Lovelle thought that his daughter’s question was as a result of her exposure to what was aired on television and believed that mass media presents a skewed view of reality.

The other aspect of fathers’ exosystem, which seemed to impact their reintegration experiences with their children was the custodial arrangements established by the judicial system. Through custodial arrangements with their children’s mothers, fathers were unable to be fully engaged with their children at any given time due to the legal constraints associated with custodial arrangements. Victor and Keith were two fathers who experienced the challenges that came with these arrangements. They shared:

Victor: It's through the custody I have limited amount of time. I only have certain days with her. You know that's kind of a whole nother matter that she's not with me every single day because her mom lives somewhere else and we are separated so she's with her mom and...then she's with me so that basically limits me...

Keith: We had 50/50 custody...He would spend half of the week with me, and half of the week with her. And then later on when he grew up we did one week at my house, and one week at her house.

As a result of the time constraints and other limitations involved with custodial arrangements, fathers appeared to be frustrated because of the interruption that these restrictions had on the relationship rebuilding process between them and their children after their release from penal institutions.

Similarly, fathers also had to work through different issues that they faced at the macro level. These issues challenged them in their abilities to adapt to their environments, as well as how they developed as individuals throughout their reintegration process. Two notable areas where fathers were challenged to adapt to their environment were as it related to their social interchanges and how willing they were able to make lifestyle changes. While the former manifested itself in negative exchanges between participants and members of society, or the general perception that participants had of how society felt about formerly incarcerated individuals, the latter emerged as a result of fathers' willingness to make adjustments in their lives so that they could experience successful reintegration. Below are examples of fathers in the study, who identified with both scenarios.

From the perspective of social interchanges, fathers acknowledged that people generally have a negative view of formerly incarcerated individuals. In fact, one father who goes by the pseudonym Blake, succinctly stated that “*just the stigma of having been in prison,*” was a challenge to his reintegration experience. Another father who goes by

the pseudonym Rupert, provided more details on how he was stigmatized because of his appearance (dress code). This incident happened while he was socializing with his kids.

Rupert: So, I still look a certain way, so people judge you so it's hard to get a job, you know... Or you're walking around with the kids and people are asking them if they are all right thinking that because they're walking with me, they shouldn't be all right. Because they are assuming that maybe I'm putting them in danger without even knowing that I've had custody for my kids for three years already, and they're still with me.

The perceived stigma experienced by these men, also influenced how they thought about the feelings their children would have towards them after their incarceration. This was challenging for Greg who exclaimed that, *"I didn't know that they (his kids) were going to accept me because of all the damage that I did, that I caused."* Similarly, Fred was also concerned about the level of acceptance he would receive from his children.

Fred: Basically, the fact that I've been in prison...the things I've done and they've known. To me it kind of sound like... maybe they don't look at me as their dad because you know jails or prisons, people look at that like...that's a bad person. So, I didn't know how my kids felt about that part.

However, as Fred further disclosed, things worked out well for him in his relationship with his kids. As such, he was able to say, *"but luckily, it was okay. It's going okay, they just understand that I was doing what I thought I could do to support them during that time. So that's a blessing."*

The perceived stigma from society as well as fathers' past criminogenic behaviors, also compelled fathers to make lifestyle changes. This was evident among most of the men in the study and happened prior to their release from prison. Oliver, one of the fathers in the study, explained the process of his transformation.

Oliver: The things that I was doing was getting more focused on change in the old man meaning my way of thoughts meaning my actions...the things that I had

done. If I didn't look at change from that standpoint of what I had to really do with this. I would never ever be able to live a life without being back incarcerated again so I had to take a serious look as a whole and knowing that I had to make some serious adjustments life living changes to be able to be the father ah the husband and all these things that I needed to learn on my own independently...how to be... so I did a lot of thinking with that...

Fred was prompted to make lifestyle changes and as a result, disassociated himself from bad influences because he didn't want to be reincarcerated.

Fred: I mean I changed, cause I really wasn't trying to go back to prison. Because a lot of the things that I was doing, to be put back there, I stayed away from. I didn't talk to certain people no more I just got rid of that completely.

For Andrew, whose relationship with his children was broken because of his incarceration, he tried to work on changing himself as opposed to trying to change how his children were acting towards him.

Andrew: The first thing I had to do was to work on me, I had to find out why I was behaving the way I was after achieving as much as I have achieved in my life. I wanted to know how not to repeat the cycle again. And so, I couldn't focus on them because they were too bitter, and I didn't have enough time to come back out to a society that is unforgiving...

Andrew further realized that he had PTSD, which led him to seek help from a mental health hospital, as well as a support group. Andrew shared: *"Once I found out why I began to behave like I did, that's when the lights came on that I needed to get into some self-help groups..."* Thus, Andrew and other fathers in the study recognized that in order to experience some level of success after their release from prison, they either had to make changes through personal commitment, or through self-help groups.

The final aspect of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, which corroborates well with the grounded theory model of this study, is the chronosystem. This dimension of the ecological theory can be understood within the context of how well fathers were able to adapt to changes in themselves as well as in their environments over

time. A typical example which emerged from the present study was the appreciation and adaptability that fathers demonstrated as they evolved in their understanding and commitment to their roles as fathers. Greg was one such father who demonstrated this phenomenon. As previously mentioned, Greg was abandoned by his dad at an early age and as a result, he abandoned his children as well. Over time however, Greg matured in his understanding of who a father is and the role that a father should play in his children's lives.

Greg: I did what my dad did to me (*Here Greg refers to him being abandoned by his dad*). So as far as that, like today I believe I know that I do know what the concept of being a father is, because today I am there for my children. And I'm learning, still learning, still a learning process for me because all those years that I abandoned my children, doesn't make up for 5 years...being there for my children because they are my responsibility. At the end of the day God blessed me with those children.

At the time of the interview, Greg was at a point where he was playing an active role in his children's lives because he now viewed them as his responsibility.

Similarly, as part of fathers' evolving values – a theme that emerged from the grounded theory study, fathers were able to experience personal growth. One notable effect of this growth was demonstrated through the new perspectives that these men now had in regard to their roles as fathers. Below are a few notable examples that were extracted from the study.

Lovelle: But, I had to learn to be patient, and to be honest and open. It couldn't be because I'm dad and I said so anymore, you know I have to look at things from a different perspective of... you know, I missed time as dad so, our relationship is hurt so I had to build her trust.

Andre: A lot of the classes that I take, and (the people) I made friendship with, I decided that the only way that I could change the situation that I was in was by changing my image.

Oliver: The things that I was doing was getting more focused on changing the old man meaning my way of thoughts, meaning my actions...the things that I had done. If I didn't look at change from that standpoint of what I had to really do with this. I would never ever be able to live a life without being back incarcerated again so I had to take a serious look as a whole and knowing that I had to make some serious adjustments life living changes to be able to be the father ah... the husband and all these things that I needed to learn on my own independently...

Thus, as fathers reintegrated into the lives of their children, most of them made deliberate changes as they adapted to various aspects of their environments. This resulted in personal growth and improvement in their relationships with their children.

Modifications Made from Original Proposal

There was one modification made to the present study, which was not in the original proposal. The original proposal outlined that snowball sampling would be the means by which participants would be recruited. However, as the research process progressed, it was difficult to recruit participants through snowball sampling. Consequently, purposive sampling was employed, which allowed the researcher to utilize his judgement in selecting participants based on their experience of the phenomenon being explored (Emmel, 2013; Given, 2008).

Implications and Limitations

The present study utilized grounded theory methodology and purposive sampling to understand the experiences of previously incarcerated fathers within Southern California. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory was corroborated with the themes that emerged from the grounded theory process, which helped to further

explain the various factors that enhanced or hindered the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers.

A number of themes emerged as a result of the grounded theory process, which has implication for theory, research, and practice. From a theoretical perspective, the themes and model, which emerged from the grounded theory process, provided a useful framework from which theories can be developed to provide further understanding, explanation, and interpretation of fathers' reintegration experiences. Furthermore, researchers are able to utilize results from the present study for guidance when conducting ongoing research on post-incarcerated fathers and their children.

From a practical perspective, results as depicted in the ecological model has the potential of providing and sensitizing family life practitioners and other stakeholders, about the multiple levels and various interactions among and between various ecological units (Westney, 1993). In the case of post-incarcerated fathers who are desirous of interacting or re-engaging with their children, community-based or neighborhood programs can be so structured that children and partners are prepared through various education programs, on how to interact and relate to ex-offending fathers after their release from prison. Similarly, other stakeholders such as government can be influenced to enact policies regarding healthcare, employment, and custodial arrangements so that post-incarcerated fathers are in a position to take care of their health and their children's well-being after incarceration.

Additionally, since the ecological theory is of such that it takes into account various ecosystems, an understanding and use of the theory in light of post-incarcerated fathers' experiences within their various ecosystems, is important for community

organisers who are seeking to develop collaborative efforts between families and communities. This is not new to the field since practioners such as Perkins, Ferrari, Covey, and Keith (2005), have successfully utilized the ecological theory to facilitate collaborative community efforts between children and families in specific communities. Similarly, an understanding and utilization of the ecological model can assist community organisers to do collaborative efforts within communities so that the challenges facing post-incarcerated fathers and their children can be minimized.

For research purposes, findings from this present study provide a rationale for the exploration of various variables or factors within the ecosystem that affect the family as they adapt to changes within the family system (Westney, 1993). In this case, findings from the present study, can provide useful information and insight when proceeding to do further research on post-incarcerated fathers and their children. Additionally, the results are likely to set the stage for further research on factors that influence how post-incarcerated fathers and their children re-establish relationships after incarceration. Furthermore, because the family is inter-related in structure and function, it is useful to utilize findings to further explore how various environments within the system impact individuals, family development, and quality of life for individuals within the system (Westney, 1993).

Despite the aforementioned implications and benefits which were derived from the present study, there were two noticable limitations. The first limitation was the data gathering process. For the most part, this process was subjective because the researcher had to rely solely on the information provided by participants in the study. Another limitation was the researcher's role as an outsider. In this regard, it was difficult for the

researcher to empathize with these men as they shared their experiences. In addition, there were times prior to interviews that the researcher experienced some level of apprehension and anxiety for fear of being accepted by participants. Nevertheless, the researcher's fears were quelled by prior contact and screening of participants, and also the less invasive questions that initiated the interviews. Additionally, as an outsider, at times it was difficult for the researcher to fully understand some of the terms that participants used to describe their experiences. When experiences like these took place during interviews, participants were willing to explain and give full descriptions of their experiences so that the researcher could fully understand the context from which participants were speaking.

In summary, this present study revealed that the reintegration experiences of previously incarcerated fathers, were complex and dynamic ones. Moreover, the themes which evolved from the grounded theory process suggested that participants' experiences could best be theorized as an adaptive iterative process of reintegration. Despite the limitations, results of this present study have significant implications for research, theory and practice. Furthermore, as researchers and practitioners expand their work on fathers who are seeking to reconnect with their children after incarceration, there is a need for collaborative work to be done between various stakeholders so that effective programs can be implemented for previously incarcerated fathers and their families. Additionally, researchers should consider expanding on the themes which emerged from this grounded theory study, as well as expand their studies to include children and caregivers of previously incarcerated fathers. In effect, these studies would lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of previously incarcerated fathers, their

children, and their children's caregivers, which in turn would facilitate more effective programs and services for these men and their families.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH FLYER



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

School of Behavioral Health

Fathers Needed For Research Study:

Reconnecting with Children After Incarceration:
A Qualitative Study Exploring the Reintegration Experiences of Post-Incarcerated
Fathers

FATHER'S POST-INCARCERATION EXPERINCES

We are conducting a research study to examine Fathers' perceptions of the various factors that enhance or hinder their relationship experiences with their children prior to, during, and after incarceration. By participating, you can help us better understand the processes involved in fathers' relationship experiences with their children during these transitional periods.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

1. Previously incarcerated biological fathers aged 25-70 within Southern California.
2. Participants must have spent a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 15 years in a penal institution.
3. Participants should have a child or children 3 to 18 years of age during period of research enquiry (i.e. prior to, during, and after incarceration).
4. Prospective participant should have provided some level of financial support to child or children prior to being incarcerated.
5. Participants should be released after serving a minimum of 2 years with no rearrests within 3 years of release.

Qualified Participants WILL RECEIVE:

1. A \$10 gift card to Wal-Mart or Amazon upon completion of interview.

For additional information and to sign up for participation, please contact:

Sheldon Smith, shsmith@llu.edu, (269) 861-6032)

or

Jackie Williams-Reade, Jwilliamsreade@llu.edu, (909-) 558-4547 ext. 47025

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: (Pseudonym) _____

Age: _____

Race or Ethnicity:

- African American/Black
- Asian American
- European American/White
- Latin American/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern American
- Native American
- Multiracial or other: _____

Education Level:

- Less than High School
- High School Graduate
- No College
- Some College
- Associate Degree
- Bachelors
- Masters
- Doctorate
- Other (Please specify): _____

Marital Status:

- Cohabiting/Living together
- Dating
- Divorced
- Engaged

- Separated
- Single
- Married
- Widowed

Employment Status:

- Employed
- Full-time
- Part-time
- Self-employed
- Unemployed

Occupation/Trade:

- (Please specify): _____

Yearly Personal Income:

- Below \$10,000
- \$10,001 to \$20,000
- \$20,001 to \$30,000
- \$30,001 to \$40,000
- \$40,001 to \$50,000
- \$50,001 to \$60,000
- Over \$60,000

Yearly Household Income:

- Below \$10,000
- \$10,001 to \$20,000
- \$20,001 to \$30,000

\$30,001 to \$40,000

\$40,001 to \$50,000

\$50,001 to \$60,000

Over \$60,000

How religious do you consider yourself to be?

Very religious

Fairly religious

Slightly religious

Not religious at all

Religious or Spiritual Preference:

Atheist

Agnostic

Buddhist

Christian

Confucianist

Hindu

Jewish

Muslim

Spiritual

Taoist

Other

How often do you attend church?

Once per week

Once per month

Two or more times per month

Once per year

Two or more times per year

Other (Please specify): _____

How active are you at church?

- Very active
- Somewhat active
- Not active
- Other (Please specify):

Number of Child (Children), Gender & Ages:

<i>Birth Order of Child (Children)</i>	<i>Gender (Male/Female) of Child (Children)</i>	<i>Age of Child (Children)</i>
First		
Second		
Third		
Fourth		
Fifth		

How many mothers have given birth to your children?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Other (Please specify): _____

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

Interview Time (Minutes)	Pseudonym	Age	Race Ethnicity	Level of Education	Marital Status	Employment Status	Yearly Personal Income (K)	Yearly Household Income (K)	Religiosity	Religious Preference	Frequency of Church Attendance	Level of Participation	# of Children	# of Mothers	Time Served	Type of Offense	Re-arrest (Y/N)	Type of Interview
24:44:00	Payton	34	European American	Some College	Married	F/T Employed	40k – 50k	40k – 50k	Very Spiritual	Christian	Once per week	Somewhat Active	2	1	2012-2014	Unknown	N	Telephone Interview
44:00:00	Oliver	56	African American	High School	Married	Self-Employed (F/T)	≤ 10k	50k – 60k	Very Religious	Christian	2x or more per month	Very Active	5	5	1997-2007	Drug Related	N	Face to Face
24:54:00	Gordon	53	African American	Some College	Married	F/T Employed	50k – 60k	≥ 60K	Fairly Religious	Christian	Once per week	Somewhat Active	3	1	2003-2006	Burglary/ Prescription	N	Face to Face
23:32	Fred	46	African American	Less than High School	Married	F/T Employed	10k – 20k	20k – 30k	Slightly Religious	Christian	Once per year	Not Active	20	6	2006-2014	Drug Related	N	Telephone Interview
49:31:00	Eddy	44	Latino American	Some College	Married	F/T Employed	40k – 50k	≥ 60K	Slightly Religious	Christian	2x or more per year	Somewhat Active	4	3	2005-2007	Drug Related, etc.	N	Telephone Interview
65:53:00	Andre	39	Native American	Greater than Associate Degree	Single	U/E	20k – 30k	20k – 30k	Slightly Religious	Muslim	Once per week	Somewhat Active	4	1	2012-2015	Auto Theft	N	Telephone Interview
33:44:00	Lovelle	54	African American	Associate Degree	Divorced	Self-Employed (F/T)	30k - 40k	30k - 40k	Very Religious	Christian	Once per week	Somewhat Active	2	2	2011-2015	Drug Related	N	Telephone Interview
40:46:00	Don	44	African American	Some College	Divorced	U/E	≤ 10k	≤ 10k	Slightly Religious	Christian	2x or more per year	Somewhat Active	4	4	2005-2007	Drug Related	N	Telephone Interview
43:03:00	Victor	33	Latino American	Some College	Married	F/T Employed	30k - 40k	30k - 40k	Fairly Religious	Christian	2x or more per month	Somewhat Active	1	1	2008-2010	DUI Manslaughter	N	Telephone Interview
31:44:00	Randy	53	African American	Masters	Married	F/T Employed	≥ 60K	≥ 60K	Fairly Religious	Christian	3x per Week	Very Active	8	5	1995-2009	Drug Related	N	Telephone Interview
26:26:00	Blake	63	African American	Associate Degree	Divorced	Retired	≥ 10k	≥ 10k	Very Religious	Christian	3x per Week	Very Active	2	1	2006-2009	Burglary	N	Telephone Interview
36:56:00	Keith	58	European American	Masters	Engaged	F/T Employed	≥ 60K	≥ 60K	Not Religious	Spiritual	2x or more per year	Not Active	1	1	2008-2010	Unknown	N	Telephone Interview
42:49:00	Ralph	47	Native American	Masters	Divorced	Unemployed (Volunteer)	≤ 50k	≤ 50k	Fairly Religious	Christian	Once per week	Very Active	2	1	2000-2009	Unknown	N	Telephone Interview
41:19:00	Andrew	55	African American	Bachelors	Married	F/T Employed	10k - 20k	30k - 40k	Not Religious/ Spiritual	Christian	3x per Week	Very Active	5	1	2001-2008	Drug Related, etc.	N	Telephone Interview
32:15:00	Beau	53	African American	Some College	Married	F/T Employed	40k – 50k	50k – 60k	Fairly Religious	Christian	Once per week	Very Active	4	1	1997-2000	Unlawful Possession of Firearm	N	Telephone Interview
53:04:00	Solomon	48	African American	Some College	Cohabiting	F/T Employed	20k – 30k	50k – 60k	Very Religious	Christian	2x or more per month	Not Active	7	4	2012-2015	Unknown	N	Telephone Interview
34:36:00	Greg	39	Latino American	High School	Divorced	F/T Employed	10k - 20k	40k – 50k	Slightly Religious	Christian	2x or more per year	Not Active	2	1	2012-2014	Drug Related, etc.	N	Face to Face
31:39:00	Justin	38	Multi-Racial	High School	Cohabiting	F/T Employed	20k – 30k	40k – 50k	Fairly Religious	Spiritual	2x or more per year	Not Active	3	3	2012-2014	Burglary	N	Face to Face
31:35:00	Rupert	43	Latino American	Some College	Divorced	F/T Employed	10k - 20k	10k - 20k	Slightly Religious	Christian	None	Not Active	6	4	2011-2014	Burglary	N	Face to Face

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

School of Behavioral Health

Informed Consent

Reconnecting with Children After Incarceration: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Reintegration Experiences of Post- Incarcerated Fathers

PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES

For ease of reading, the word “you” or “your” will be used throughout this document to refer to the person who may enter the research program.

What is the purpose of the study?

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Faculty and a graduate student in the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at Loma Linda University. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of fathers in reconnecting with their children after incarceration. The information gathered from this study will be helpful to those who work with people in similar situations.

Why have I been chosen?

For this project, we are seeking fathers between the ages of 25 and 70 who previously provided financial support to their children before their incarceration. Participants in the study would have spent between 2 and 15 years incarcerated, had no arrests within 3 years of being released, and have children between the ages of 3 and 18.

What will participation involve?

If you participate in this study, you will take part in a one time audio-recorded interview, which will last for approximately 60 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked a number of questions about your relationship experiences with your child (children) prior

to, during, and after incarceration. These interviews will take place at a site that is private and convenient to you.

Because we might need to contact you to verify and confirm data collected during the interview, we will ask for your contact information (cell and home phone numbers). In return for your time and participation you will receive a \$10 gift card at the end of the interview.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are only minimal risks associated with involvement in this study. These include the issue of confidentiality, and negative mood after sharing personal reflection. In order to minimize the risk to confidentiality, the audio file will be transcribed within four weeks of interview, all identifiable information will be removed, codes will be assigned to transcribed data, and the audio file will be destroyed upon completion. If negative mood should arise after sharing personal reflection, we suggest consultation with a psychotherapist to address any issues. This service may be obtained at the behavioral health institute, Loma Linda university, 1686 Barton rd., Redlands, ca (phone) 909-558-9552 as well as Care Counselors Inc., 1881 Commercenter dr. E San Bernardino, ca 92408.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Participation in this study is confidential. Once the interview is transcribed, all records of your participation will be deleted. When the results of this study are published, all records will be grouped together with other participants and we will not report any data from your interview that in anyway identify you as a participant.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact my supervisor Dr. Jackie Williams-Reade at the School of Behavioral Health, Loma Linda, California 92350 by phone: (909) 558-4547 x47025, or by e-mail at jwilliamsreade@llu.edu. If you wish to contact an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any questions about your rights or to report a complaint you may have about the study, you may contact the Office of Patient Relations, Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, CA 92354, phone (909) 558-4647, e-mail patientrelations@llu.edu for information and assistance.

BENEFITS

The study does not offer any direct benefit to you. However, the information gained from the study may help to deepen understanding of the experiences of men in similar situation and may impact future program and services that serve families in like situations.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHT

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you decline to participate or feel like withdrawing from this study after you have started, you are free to do so. At

anytime during the interview, if you do not want to answer a question, just let us know and we will move on to a different question.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

By signing this consent form, I am giving permission for me to be interviewed about fathers relationship experiences before, during, and after periods of incarceration. My choice to participate in this study is voluntary. I understand that I may choose not to answer any question and that I may stop participating at any time. I also understand that while confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed, every effort will be made to protect personal information and to keep answers confidential.

I have read the contents of this consent form and have listened to the verbal explanation given by the interviewer. My questions concerning the interview have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understood the information above and I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this interview. I understand I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it.

Signature of Participant

Printed Name of Subject

Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I have reviewed the contents of this consent form with the person signing above. I have explained potential risks and benefits of the study.

Signature of Investigator

Printed Name of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Paternal Post-Incarceration Experiences

What were your experiences with your child (children) like prior to being incarcerated? During your period of incarceration, how did you experience your relationship with your child (children)? Since you've been released, what has your experience with your child (children) been like?

So as to ensure that I accurately convey our conversation, I would like to record our conversation with this digital recorder. (**Review Informed Consent Form**). This form provides information about the study and says you agree to the conditions outlined for this study. This form is called informed consent and it advises you that:

1. Your information is confidential
2. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time
3. There is no compensation for participation.
4. I will provide a copy of this transcript for you to review

Date _____

Time _____

Location _____

Interviewer _____

Interviewee _____

Release form signed? ____

Notes to interviewee: Thank you for your participation. I anticipate our discussion lasting between 45 to 60 minutes. I believe your input will be valuable to this research and will help fathers and families who are going through similar situation to better

understand and appreciate your experiences. Before we go any further, I'd like for you to fill out this demographic form.

Introduction:

Once again, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity in allowing me to speak with you today. My research focuses on the experiences of post-incarcerated fathers and you have been identified as someone who might have a lot to share. Just so you know, I'm not here to judge, criticize, nor condemn you. However, I'd like to hear your experiences so that I can better understand and appreciate what you, along with other fathers like yourself have experienced. Hopefully, the experiences you share will provide hope to others who are going through similar experiences.

A. PATERNAL EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

1. People have different definition for what it means to be a father. What does the term father or fatherhood means to you?
2. Tell me what it was like for you growing up with your father? (**Probe:** How has this helped to shape your experience as a father?)
3. In your role as father, how would you describe your early experience with your child (children)? (**Follow up questions:** Were they negative/positive? If so in what ways?)

Transition:

Thanks for sharing those with me. Let me now ask you a different set of questions.

B. PATERNAL EXPERIENCES DURING INCARCERATION

- 1) While you were imprisoned, what were your thoughts about how your children felt about your imprisonment?
- 2) Share with me some of your memories about being away and the contact you had with your children. How did you manage your role as a father in your child's (children's) lives? How would you describe the relationship you had with your children while you were away?
- 3) While you were imprisoned, no doubt there were lots of conversations among your peers about their role as a father and their role in their families. As you remember, what were some of the conversations, lessons, or values you heard discussed among the men in that context?
- 4) As you reflect on the things you've heard and learned while imprisoned, how do you think these things affected your attitudes and your relationship with your own children?
- 5) If there were a woman or a mother involved in the lives of your children and with you, how do you think that that relationship influenced the relationship you had with your children or the relationship your children had with you?
- 6) Tell me a little about the quantity and quality of the contact you had with your children? (How often were you able to see or talk to your child/children?)
- 7) As you near the end of your prison term, what were some of the thoughts and feelings that began to surface as you thought about reconnecting with your children (child)? And, what was different in the way you acted knowing you were near the end of your prison term?

Transition: **You are sharing a lot with me thank you. I have a few more questions that I'd like to ask.**

C. PATERNAL EXPERIENCES AFTER INCARCERATION

- 1) Immediately after being released from prison, what was it like for you in your relationship with your children? Are there any other things you'd like to share about your new adjustment?
- 2) Please share your memories about the things that helped to support you in your role as a father to your children. (**Follow up: Talk a little bit about the role of your family...community...government... or other organization that supports you in your role as a father**)
- 3) Now please share some of the things that made it difficult or more challenging for you to play the role as a father in the lives of your children?
- 4) What would it take for you to have a *good/better* (or a more vibrant) relationship with your (child) children?

Transition: **Wrap-up**

- 5) Well, this concludes the questions that I have for you today. You've really shared a lot with me. No doubt, the information you've shared will be beneficial to people who are interested in your experience. I'm sure it will also help fathers who have been in your situation to have a more positive relationship with their children. Again thank you.
- 6) Before I go, is there anything else you'd like to share with me today?
- 7) If not...should I need to follow-up with you just for the sake of clarification for anything we've discussed, would it be okay to do so?...(**Thank you**)

APPENDIX F

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant 1:

Payton identified as a 34-year-old European American (EA) male. During his early childhood, he was adopted by at least five different foster parents. As such, he did not meet any of his biological parents until he became an adult during which time, he met his father. His early experiences with his two children (who shares the same biological mother) seemed to be positive at first. In that, both himself and his wife were involved in ministries at the church among other things until they both started to abuse substances. As things began to disintegrate in his marriage, he got incarcerated 3 times prior to the current period (2012-2014). During these periods however, he tried to communicate with his children through visits at first, and then letters. However, he later found out that his wife was not giving his kids the letters. Despite visits and the good relationship Payton seemed to have had with his kids while he was incarcerated, after his release from prison, successful reintegration into his children's lives was hindered because of broken relationship with their mother, distance (because the mom had moved farther away with the children), and lack of financial support to travel the distance to reach out to them. Hence, even though he desired to reconnect with his children, his role was limited as a father after his release from prison. **(Unsuccessful)**

Participant 2:

Oliver identified as an African American (AA) male aged 56 who had 5 children with 5 different women prior to his incarceration. He was incarcerated from 1997-2007 for a drug related offence. During his early years, Oliver grew up with his mother and stepfather. It was not until he was incarcerated that he met his biological father. During his incarceration, Oliver had minimal contact with his children due to his fractured/broken relationships with their mothers. Upon release from prison, even though Oliver had remarried and moved on with his life, he was still able to maintain a good relationship with his children. He is encouraged and supported by his wife and mentors in his church who encourages him to continue in his paternal role to his kids. **(Somewhat Successful)**

Participant 3:

Gordon identified as a 53-year-old African American (AA) male. He was incarcerated 3 years (2003-2006) for prescription burglary. Even though he knew his father while growing up, he did not live with him except for one year. Apart from that experience with his dad, his mom was the one who nurtured both himself and his brothers. As a result of his early experience in not having a father and growing up with his mom, he determined that he would always be there for his kids. Prior to his incarceration, he and his wife had 3 children together. Upon his incarceration and release, his wife was very supportive since she protected his children from the knowledge of his incarceration by persuading them that he was away on a job. When he got back, he pretty much picked up where he left off with his paternal and marital roles. **(Successful)**

Participant 4:

Fred identified as a 46-year-old African American (AA) male. During his early years, he was nurtured by his mom and stepfather and did not know his biological father. As he got older, he got in conflict with the law and was incarcerated two times. Both offenses were drug related. For his last offense, he spent eight years (2006-2014) in prison. Prior to his imprisonment, he had 20 children with 6 different women. During his incarceration, he was able to maintain his relationship with his children through his mom who facilitated visits and communication.

Upon his release, he was able to successfully reintegrate into his kids' lives. During the time of the interview, Fred and his wife continued to take care of his family. **(Successful)**

Participant 5:

Eddy self-disclosed as a 44-year-old Latino American (LA) father. He was incarcerated multiple times prior to his last incarceration during which time he served two years (2005-2007). His offences included illegal possession of firearm, assault, bodily harm, etc. During his early years, he was partially nurtured by his mother and grandmother as well as through the juvenile and foster system. As far as his father was concerned, his dad was incarcerated the majority of his life, so he did not know him. Prior to his incarceration, he had four children with three moms. For the two children that qualified for the study, he was married to their mother prior to his incarceration. However, he didn't have a good relationship with them. Eddy said he was an alcoholic and didn't go home sometimes, which allowed for dysfunction in the home. During his incarceration, Eddy didn't think about his kids due to the vulnerable environment he was in. However, after he got out, he tried to reconnect with them. He was able to get custody of two of his sons (whom he had for 8-9 years), which their mother brought to him (since she complained about the problems they were giving, and she was unable to care for them anymore) when he just got out. For one of his other children (his older daughter), after getting out of prison he tried to navigate the court system so that he could get custody of her. **(Somewhat Successful – Two sons successful; Trying to get custody of his daughter)**

Participant 6:

Andre self-disclosed as a 39-year-old Native American (NA). During his early years while growing up with both parents, his mother abandoned him and his five siblings with their father. His father whom he regarded as an "ideal father" and role model, "took up the chips" after his mom abandoned them. Andre was incarcerated twice for car theft. During his last incarceration, he served 3 years (2012-2015). Prior to his incarceration, he had 4 children with one woman. He tried to write his children letters during his incarceration, but he wouldn't receive any response. The one letter he received, painted a negative picture of their experiences. The defining moment/event that caused the fracture in his relationship with his two older children was his reincarceration, which made his children angry and upset. The children were upset because they blamed him for being reincarcerated and for leaving them with their mom whom they regarded as a "beast." As a result, even after his release from prison, his relationship remained broken with his 2 older kids because they blamed him for the experience they had with their "beastly" mom during his incarceration. However, during the time of the present study, the 2 youngest of

his children lived with him. **(Successful with 2, Unsuccessful with the other 2)**

Participant 7:

Lovelle identified as a 54-year-old African American (AA) male who had two children with two different mothers. During his early years, he grew up with his biological father whom he had a wonderful relationship with. In turn, he also had a good relationship with his 17-year-old daughter (one of two children), who qualified for the study. Lovelle was incarcerated for drug related charges and completed a prison term of 4 years (2011 – 2015). During his incarceration, he maintained his relationship with his daughter through visits and telephone calls. After his incarceration, he was able to successfully resume his relationship with his daughter through constant communication and visitation.

(Successful)

Participant 8:

Don is a 44-year-old African American (AA) male. He was incarcerated six times prior to his last incarceration. During his last incarceration, he spent 2 years behind bars for drug-related charges. He had 4 children with 4 different mothers. His early years was of such that he did not grow up with his biological father. However, he grew up with his grandmother and mother, and also had a stepfather for a brief period in his life. He had a son who qualified for this study whom he kept in touch with during his incarceration. Even though he and his son's mom had a broken relationship, they still communicated cordially in regard to matters with their son. After his release, he still kept in touch with his son and for a while, his son was living with him when he became a teenager. In the final analysis, his son moved out when he was eighteen (18), started to abuse drugs, got in trouble with the law, and is now incarcerated. Presently, Don has no relationship with his son. **(Initially successful, but now unsuccessful)**

Participant 9:

Victor identified as a Latino American (LA) male aged 33 at the time of the interview. While growing up, Victor did not know his biological father. However, he was nurtured by his mom and stepfather from the age of 6 to 16 until his mom and step-father separated. Regarding his incarceration, Victor spent two years (2008 to 2010) in penal institution because while driving under the influence, he committed manslaughter. Prior to his incarceration, Victor and his child's mother gave birth to one child. However, after he went to prison, Victor and his daughter's mom separated. During Victor's early years with his daughter, he had a close relationship with her. Victor explained that this was the case because during the first year of her life, he was unemployed, which allowed him to spend a lot of time bonding with her. Also, during Victor's incarceration he was able to maintain his relationship with his daughter through telephone calls and minimal visitation. Upon release from prison, Victor resumed his relationship with his daughter through shared custody with his daughter's mom. **(Successful)**

Participant 10:

Randy identified as a 53-year-old African American (AA) male. During Randy's early years, he grew up with his father who was a pastor. Randy felt like he was pastored more than parented because of the disciplined approach that his father took as a parent and father. As it related to his incarceration, Randy was incarcerated for conspiracy to possess

and distribute cocaine and spent 14 years (1995-2009) in a penal institution. Prior to his incarceration, he had eight (8) children with five (5) different mothers. However, his last child – a daughter that he had with his wife, was the only child that qualified for the interview. As far as Randy is concerned, he had a great relationship with his daughter before, during and after his incarceration. He disclosed that he made mistakes with his previous children and because of this, he was able to correct his mistakes and develop a closer bond with his daughter. Even though he didn't get much visits during his incarceration due to him being relocated to different facilities, after his release he was able to successfully reconnect with his daughter who at the time of the interview, had turned 17-years-old. **(Successful)**

Participant 11:

Blake identified as a 63-year-old African American (AA) male. During his early years, he grew up with both parents who were married for 65 years. His father was present for him and his siblings and tried to be a role model for them. As far as Blake's incarceration was concerned, he was incarcerated multiple times from 1996 onwards. His last incarceration was from 2006 – 2009, where he served time for shoplifting. Prior to his incarceration, Blake had two children with his wife. However, they got divorced when his children were ages 5 and 6. From thereon, his kids lived with their mother and he would visit them periodically. During his incarceration, Blake communicated to his children via letters and phone calls. However, his children (especially his son) were angry and bitter because of his incarceration. After his release, he was able to reestablish his relationship with his daughter who offered encouragement. However, his son remained bitter. **(Successful with daughter but not with son)**

Participant 12:

Keith identified as a 58-year-old European American (EA) male. As a child, Keith grew up with his biological father. Even though his dad provided for him, Keith described the relationship as one where his father was emotionally detached. Keith went on to be as successful as his dad and got married to his son's mom. Their marriage lasted for five (5) years. During his marriage, Keith explained that he had a wonderful relationship with his son and his wife prior to their divorce. He attributed their divorce to his abuse of drug and alcohol, which caused the rift in the family. After his divorce, Keith was still able to see his son through joint custodial agreement. From 2008 – 2010, Keith spent 2 years in prison for an unknown reason. During this period, Keith would receive periodic visitation from his son and mostly communicated through letters. After his release from prison, he resumed his relationship with his son and during the time of this study, Keith and his son continued to meet on a weekly basis over breakfast. Thus, even though his son did not live with him after his release, their relationship was positive and Keith's reintegration experience with his son was for the most part, successful. **(Successful)**

Participant 13:

Ralph self-identified as a 47-year-old Native American (NA) male. Ralph grew up with his dad, but he didn't have a good relationship with his father until the latter years of his life (i.e. when his dad was in hospice care on his deathbed). Ralph had two children (daughters) with one woman and served nine years (2000-2009) behind bars for an

undisclosed crime. During his incarceration, he communicated with them via letter and phone calls. However, Ralph disclosed that his daughters' mother was a negative influence and did not help in his relationship with his daughters. Upon his release from prison, Ralph tried to reach out to his daughters, but they were disinterested in his efforts in wanting to rebuild his relationship with them. Hence, his reintegration with his children was unsuccessful. **(Unsuccessful)**

Participant 14:

Andrew identified as a 55-year-old African American (AA) male. He was incarcerated five times prior to the present period. For the period related to the study, Andrew spent seven years in prison (2001-2008). The crimes that he committed included burglary, tax evasion, drug dealership, and fraud. Prior to his incarceration, he had 5 children with his wife. Even though he communicated with his kids during his incarceration, as they got older, they got bitter towards him because he kept on reoffending, which resulted in his reincarceration. Andrew's wife divorced him and remarried while he was incarcerated. Her new spouse abused her, and the children were affected to the extent that they stopped receiving their dad's phone call during his last incarceration. Upon Andrew's release, even though he remarried their mom and the children communicated with their mom, the children were still unforgiving towards him. At the time of the interview, his relationship with his children was still broken because they were still bitter towards him. **(Unsuccessful)**

Participant 15:

Beau identified as a 53-year-old African American (AA) male. He was incarcerated twenty (20) times prior to his last incarceration, when he served 3 years (1997-2000) for unlawful possession of firearm. During his early years, Beau was brought up by his mother and stepfather. However, he yearned for his biological father. While Beau was incarcerated, he communicated with his children (daughters) via telephone and utilized this medium to help them with their homework. His wife facilitated a cordial relationship between him and his children. However, she started to date someone else and this caused his children to be angry with their mom, as well as with their dad. Upon his release from prison, Beau continued to develop his relationship with his children even though they were not living together. At the time of the interview, Beau said he still had a wonderful relationship with his children. **(Somewhat Successful)**

Participant 16:

Solomon identified as a 48-year-old African American (AA) male. He had 7 children with 4 different mothers and was incarcerated for three years (2012-2015). His reason for incarceration was unknown. During his early years, Solomon grew up with both of his parents who were married. His dad was kind to him, but his parents separated due to a DUI incident involving his father. For the present study, only one of Solomon's children qualified for the interview – his 13-year-old son. Solomon disclosed that unlike his previous kids who were not nurtured properly, he was there for his 13-year-old son and provided proper nurturing for him, seeing that he had experienced what it was like to be a father with his previous kids. During Solomon's incarceration, he had minimal contact with his son, and he was able to speak to his son over the phone a couple of times. After

his release, he could only talk to his son via the telephone since his son's mom had custody of him. The geographic distance as well as financial challenges also made it difficult for Solomon to gain any meaningful access to his son. Hence, successful reintegration was not possible. **(Unsuccessful – even though he spoke with his son)**

Participant 17:

Greg identified as a 39-year-old Latino American (LA) male. He had 2 children borned to one mother and was incarcerated approximately seven (7) times since he was a juvenile. He was convicted for illegal possession of firearm and served two years (2012 – 2014) during his last incarceration. At an early age, he was abandoned by his father. In turn, he also abandoned his children. During his incarceration, he went through a process of reformation where he started to value his role as father to his children. As a result, he tried to call his children who were living with their grandmother. However, the responses he received were negative. Upon his release from prison, his kids' grandmother forgave him and gave him the opportunity to rebuild his relationship with his children. Even though his kids did not live with him at the time of the interview, Greg was able to make up for lost time with his kids by being their emergency contact, picking them up from school, and visiting them every weekend. Thus, Greg's reintegration with his children was somewhat successful. **(Somewhat Successful)**

Participant 18:

Justin identified as a 38-year-old multi-racial (MR) male who had three children with three different mothers. Since he was a juvenile, he's been incarcerated approximately forty-seven (47) times. His last incarceration saw him serving two years (2012-2014) for commercial burglary and identity theft. During his childhood, he had no father nor father figure around. As such, he was nurtured by his mother. As far as his early experiences with his children was concerned, he did not know what the role of a father was because he was only 16 when he had his first child. Based on his experiences in and out of penal institutions, Justin said he was strict with his son because he didn't want him to be involved in gangs and to get into trouble. While Justin was incarcerated, he called and wrote his children but didn't allow them to visit because he didn't want them to be exposed to the prison environment. Upon his release from prison, he was able to successfully reintegrate with his two younger sons. However, at the time of the interview, his first and oldest son was serving a 16-year prison sentence. Justin seemed to take responsibility for this because he was of the impression that his oldest son "*picked up the wrong traits from me before I was actually able to make the full transition.*" **(Successful with two – unsuccessful with one)**

Participant 19:

Rupert identified as a 43-year-old Latino American (LA) male who had 6 children with 4 different women. He grew up with his biological father whom he viewed as a caring, kind, loving, and hardworking man. As a result of the care and love that he received from his parents, he was able to provide similar care and love to all of his children. In regard to his incarceration, Rupert was incarcerated multiple times since he was a juvenile with his last incarceration lasting for three years (2011-2014) where he served time for carjacking and stolen property. During his incarceration, he tried to maintain his relationship with

his children through phone calls and letters. Whereas the mothers would prevent his kids from accepting phone calls, Rupert would write to his kids who in turn would write back to him. Upon his release from prison, he was able to gain custody over 3 of his younger kids (who share the same mother) from their mother. (**Somewhat Successful**)

APPENDIX G

THEORETICAL MODEL OF PARTICIPANTS' REINTEGRATION EXPERIENCES

