"I'M JUST TRYING TO FIT BACK IN"

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL BONDS, STIGMA, AND LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE REENTRY EXPERIENCES OF RECENTLY INCARCERATED ADULTS

by

Ashley R. Kilmer

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology
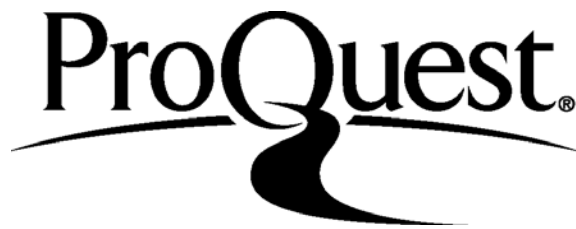
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ABSTRACT

This project integrates concepts from both the fields of law and society and criminology as a way of creating a more comprehensive theoretical lens in which to examine the reentry process and understand the successes and struggles during those critical first few months following release. Specifically, this study examines how the legal consciousness of returning citizens, experiences of stigma, and the development and maintenance of social bonds work together or individually to impact individuals' experiences with reentry. Findings from semi-structured interviews with recently incarcerated individuals reveal that each of the three theoretical concepts have numerous relationships to one another as well as a meaningful role in the reentry process. Findings from this project shed light on the real experiences, struggles, and successes of people coming out of prison during the initial weeks and months of returning home. It is hoped that the stories of these men and women will illuminate the ways in which families, communities, policy-makers, and society can assist these individuals as they try to begin their lives as formerly incarcerated adults.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

If people really knew and can see what we actually had to deal with and just take the time to actually give us a true chance and look past our past and actually help us to get ourselves together, especially those that really want it, I think that people would really invest a lot more into inmates that are coming home. (Chris)

Background and Interest in Research Topic

This research really is a culmination of my graduate school training and experiences. It takes those experiences and integrates them with the theoretical knowledge I have gained to create a project that examines an often-ignored group in our society: the *people* who have recently been released from prison. When I was earning my Master's degree I had the opportunity to co-facilitate an intervention program for men who had been convicted of sex offenses and were considered a "high risk" to recidivate. This was my first encounter with an offender population and I came with assumptions and attitudes that many of us hold regarding people convicted of sex crimes: they were dangerous, inherently "bad" people, and I should treat them with caution and suspicion. Over the course of this program I realized I was getting to know these men, and at least the few that I spent more time speak with, I liked them. This was a direct challenge to those comfortably held assumptions: these were bad people, right? I soon recognized that, while there were definitely registrants that were incredibly predatory and manipulative (including some of the men I worked with), there were many others who were "ordinary" men who made poor decisions. It was the first time that I saw a "sex offender" as a person, as a father or a son, and not as a

"monster" (Schultz, 2005). This evolution in the way I thought about men who had been convicted of sex crimes was the launching point into my research into sex offender laws and policies that impacted the lives of those convicted of sex offenses.

Throughout my graduate training I've continued to engage in research that examines correctional and criminal justice-related policies and practices, including the curriculum and implementation of substance abuse treatment programming and the impact of sex offender policies on the family members of registrants. In addition, I was given the chance to complete the training for the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, an educational program that brings university students into correctional settings to learn along-side incarcerated men and women, not as two different groups, but as peers. Their goal is to engage in deeper conversations about social issues through collaborative dialogue and exploration. Training run by university faculty as well as incarcerated men at a prison in southern Pennsylvania was one of the most professionally and personally transformative experiences I have ever had. Although I was already well aware of the dehumanizing practices and rhetoric used in our correctional systems across the United States (Guenther, 2012), this was one of my first opportunities to see it first-hand. I watched as our incarcerated teachers were filed in and out of the auditorium where training sessions took place, I walked past the depressingly rundown cell-blocks that they called home (and some would continue to call home for the rest of their lives). It almost physically hurt to watch these men be returned to cages, where only moments ago they had provided such incredible information and insight on how to promote social justice within the classroom or engage students to confront bias and assumptions in their writing and class discussions. Again, these were intelligent, respectful men and while they had

committed crimes, these men were not the dangerous or violent "criminals" that society leads so many to believe is the vast majority of incarcerated individuals, when this is not the case (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2016).

In addition to completing the Inside-Out Training I was also able to serve as a facilitator for an Inside-Out course at a men's prison in Wilmington, Delaware. It was during this experience that I got to know many men who were incarcerated and hear their stories about where they came from, what their lives were like before they came to prison, what opportunities and resources they had access to while in prison, including the course they were currently enrolled it, and what their plans were for when they were released. It was the first time I had the chance to listen to first-hand accounts of the excitement and worry regarding returning back to society after incarceration. Their stories inspired me to want to know more, to gain a fuller understanding about what is was like to come out of prison, to find housing, find a job, reconnect with family and children, feel accepted, and ultimately feel successful. I also wanted to hear it from their point of view and to share these personal experiences of reentry with others, so that scholars and practitioners can gain further insight into the challenges, achievements, needs, and strengths of returning citizens.

The theoretical concepts that I use to frame this research very much relate to the highly personal experience of reentry: social bonds refer to the types of attachments and connections people have with other individuals and with their communities, stigma is experienced through social interactions, and legal consciousness refers to the way people think about and experience the law in their lives (a more detailed definition and discussion of these concepts is provided in chapter 2). Therefore, this research project really was a combination of my theoretical

interests within the fields of criminology and law and society as well as my desire to capture and share the personal, human stories of reentry from men and women coming out of prison.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of Research

One of the many consequences of mass incarceration in the United States is the fact that hundreds of thousands of men and women are returning to their communities and face the challenges of establishing a crime free lifestyle and adhering to their conditions of supervision. Sadly, many cannot overcome the obstacles that are placed in front of them and slide back into a lifestyle of crime or violate a condition of their release, which could ultimately lead to re-incarceration (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). As a result, reentry-focused programming and practices (both in prison and within the community) are on the rise (Phelps, 2011), to try and identify the support and resources men and women need to succeed on the "outside". The use of assessment tools to identify "risk" and "needs" are wide-spread and there is an ever-growing body of literature that aims to answer the question of "what works" in reentry programming (Petersilia, 2004; Visher, 2005).

Despite a growing understanding of what factors may contribute or protect an individual from recidivating (the most commonly used outcome measure of reentry research), there is less known about reentry as a process. Although reentry scholars have recently encouraged the examination of reentry or desistance from crime as a process, rather than a discreet event (Visher & Travis, 2003; Laub and Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Leverentz, 2014), it is still an area that needs additional exploration. In addition, despite growing significantly, there are still a limited number of studies that provide qualitative, narrative accounts of recently incarcerated

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individuals' experiences (Ospal, 2011; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999; Maruna, 2001; Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000). The more voices that can be brought to the forefront of scholarship, particularly the voices of those experiencing the social phenomena under examination, can provide additional insights that could not be gained through only collecting information from those in power or those removed from the experience (Harding, 1991; Disch & Hawkesworth, 2015).

There is a robust body scholarship that exists that examines the role of social bonds on reentry-related outcomes, and there have been consistent findings about the importance of bonds (particularly social support and employment) on reentry outcomes (Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000; Bahr, Harris, Fisher, & Armstrong, 2010; Sampson and Laub, 1990; Berg and Huebner, 2010). Individuals with these social bonds are more likely to be successful following their release from prison. The role of stigma in the reentry process is also documented in the existing literature, most notably in regards to barriers to employment (Pager, 2003), but also in the importance of shedding a spoiled identity (Goffman, 1963). Studies have found that positive transformation usually requires individuals to remove or distance themselves from their stigmatized, "offender" identity, before they are able to make other positive changes in their lives (Bachman, Kerrison, Paternoster, O'Connel, & Smith, 2013), and the importance of redeeming one's self and identity in the transformation process (Maruna, 2001). Legal consciousness is perhaps the least studied among criminalized populations, but studies like Sarat's (1990) work on examining the role of law in the lives of welfare recipients provides parallels to the dominating role of law (specifically the criminal justice system) in the lives of recently incarcerated men and women.

Each of these bodies of literature (although the research on legal consciousness to a lesser extent), provide evidence that social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness have an impact on the reentry process. What is not known however, is how these theoretical concepts may be inter-related and how that may influence people's reentry experience. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to examine the reentry process and the relationships social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness have between one another and on the reentry experience for recently incarcerated men and women. Additionally, I want this project to share the actual experiences and voices of returning citizens and to shed light on their unique experiences with reentry. As a result, I also include an examination of the role of race, gender, and geography in individuals' reentry experiences. In sum, the current research addresses the following questions:

RQ1: What are individuals' experiences with stigma, social bond formation, and the law following release from incarceration?

RQ2: How do the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness relate to each other and influence individuals' reentry experiences?

RQ3: How do factors such as gender, race, and geographic location influence the reentry process?

Organization of this Dissertation

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on mass incarceration and reentry as well as the theoretical concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness. The chapter begins with a discussion about mass incarceration as a way of understanding the "scope" of reentry within the United States, particularly in regards to how many individuals are returning to the communities each week following a period of incarceration. Next, literature is reviewed on social control, or social bond

theory. The tenets of the theory are explained and there is a discussion of prior

empirical applications of this theory, with an emphasis on studies that looked at social

bonds and recidivism. Next, there is a discussion about stigma and the various sources

and types of stigma that individuals can experience. Similarly to the section on social

bonds, this section also reviews empirical tests and applications of this particular

concept. Next there is a discussion about the concept of legal consciousness with a

review of how this concept has been examined in marginalized populations. I then

present my research questions and goals of the current project as well as a visual

depiction of my theoretical model. I briefly discuss how the theoretical concepts may

be inter-related, drawing on existing literature that can speak to these potential

relationships.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed methodology of the project, including

information about the research site, sample recruitment, how interviews were

conducted, and how the data was analyzed. Demographic information about

participants is reported in this chapter.

Chapters 4-6 present the findings of this research, organized by the types of

relationships that were examined. In Chapter 4, I present findings that demonstrate the

ways in which the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness directly

influenced individuals' reentry process. I also include a brief discussion at the

beginning of this chapter about how individuals prepared for their release, their

anticipations about the reentry process, and their experiences on their first day out of

prison. The chapter concludes with a discussion about how individuals' legal

consciousness has changed over time. Chapter 5 discusses the inter-relationships

between the theoretical concepts. First, I discuss how social bonds and stigma were

related to one another, then social bonds and legal consciousness, and finally legal consciousness and stigma. Chapter 6 discusses the findings regarding the roles of race, gender, and geography on people's reentry experience.

Chapter 7 identifies and discusses the limitations of the current project as well as the significant contributions the findings make to the discipline. Areas for future research and policy implications of the current findings are also discussed.

A Statement on Language

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it was important for me to share experiences of *people* going through the reentry process. To that point, it was important for me to be deliberate in the labels that I applied to the men and women who participated in this project. Much of the language around men and women who have been incarcerated, such as probationer, ex-offender, or felon, is stigmatizing and dehumanizing. I wanted to challenge the use of this type of terminology by using person-first language as much as possible throughout this document. In order to avoid overly cumbersome or repetitive phrases, I use several terms throughout this project. When discussing methodology I refer to the men and women in my project as participants. This language seemed appropriate when discussing topics such as sampling and recruitment and data analysis. However, I switch to more humanizing language in chapters 4-7 when I begin to share the stories of those who participated in my project. This use of person-first language in research on people who are currently or formerly incarcerated will help mitigate the negative connotations attached to more dehumanizing terms. Additionally, the use of person-centered language also promotes the belief that individuals are not defined by past behavior and capable of transformation (Veysey, Christian, & Martinez, 2013; Hickman, 2015). Returning

citizens is a term that has seen growing adoption over recent years as it places the emphasis on these men and women as being members, or citizens, in society. In most instances though, I will simply use the term "people", "individuals" or "men and women" as I share their stories. This language is the most humanizing and also recognizes their individuality and the uniqueness of their personal stories.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Rise of Mass Incarceration

As of 2013, 2,220,300 individuals were housed in United States prisons and jails. When adding in those who are serving sentences in the community or who are on probation or parole, that number soars to 6,899,000 individuals (or 1 in 31 adults) who are under some form of correctional supervision (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). The United States has the highest prison population in the world, with an incarceration rate of 710 per 100,000 people, compared to Russia (467 per 100,000), Iran (283 per 100,000), and China (124 per 100,000), nations often perceived as highly punitive by Americans. The United States represents only 5% of the world's population, but represents 25% of its prison population (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2016).

These statistics are inherently alarming, but become increasingly jarring once incarceration rates are broken down by racial categories. As of 2013, African-American males were six times more likely than whites and 2.5 times more likely than Hispanics to go to prison or jail (Sentencing Project, 2013). The Sentencing Project's report (2013) to the United Nations' Human Rights Committee suggests that if current incarceration trends continue, one in every three African-American males born today can expect to go to prison or jail in their lifetime, compared to one in seventeen white males born today. As a result of current crime policy practices coupled with the racially disproportionate incarceration statistics mentioned above, Lerman and Weaver (2014) have identified a rapidly growing number of "custodial citizens" in our society (many of which are minorities) that consist of those who have had criminal justice

system interaction without an actual arrest, those who have been arrested or convicted of low level crimes, and those who have experienced some period of incarceration.

These numbers illustrate the almost inconceivable reach of the United States correctional system into the lives of its citizens. Beyond those who are directly under supervision, tens of millions more are likely impacted by incarceration such as family members, loved ones, and even entire communities. Of the many individuals who are incarcerated, over 95% will eventually return to their communities to try and pick up the pieces and heal the wounds of those they left behind. The Office of Justice Programs estimates that approximately 10,000 incarcerated individuals return to their communities each week, with over 600,000 returning each year. Unfortunately, many of those thousands who are released return back to prison or jail within the first few years following their release. A comprehensive 2014 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics examined the recidivism rates of returning citizens from 30 states released in 2005 for the first 5 years following their release and found that 67.8% of all released individuals were rearrested within the first three years of being released (approximately half were re-incarcerated), with over 75% of released individuals rearrested within five years (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). Furthermore, of those who were rearrested within the follow-up period, 36.8% were rearrested within the first 6 months of their release and over 55% of those rearrested had that arrest occur within their first year of release. These findings emphasize the well-documented knowledge that the first few months following release from prison are a critical period where individuals have a high likelihood of violating probation or parole conditions or committing a new offense.

Many correctional institutions anticipate the struggles their detainees will likely face upon release and have established a variety of "reentry programming" approaches aimed at assisting individuals in their transition from inmate to a community resident once again. Research on prison-based programming trends reveal that contradictory to the perception that programming has decreased in the last 20 years, programing may instead be shifting to a focus on reentry (Phelps, 2011). Phelps found that trends show a decrease in academic-focused rehabilitative programing, but a steady increase in reentry-oriented programming from 1991 to 2004. This indicates that the amount of programming provided in prisons may be relatively unchanged since the early 90s, with existing programs being rebranded or replaced with reentry-focused ones. These programs can range in intensity, duration, and curriculum, but generally focus on helping the individual seek out necessary resources for employment, housing, education and vocational skills, job readiness and resume skills, reunification classes on how to connect with loved ones (particularly children), emotion management and coping skills, staying away from drugs and alcohol, and prosocial thinking (Visher, Kachnowski, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004). Some institutions may even devote an entire living pod to reentry planning, so that those living on this pod receive 24/7 information, skill building, and support. Other institutions may offer "step-down" work release programs that allow individuals to transition from a more secure facility to a less-secure facility that permits employment seeking and job attendance, before ultimately being released from a correctional setting.

Data on the effectiveness of reentry-focused programming is fairly mixed due to the broad range of program content that can fall under the umbrella of reentry-related programs as well as considerable variability in research methodology and rigor

(Visher, 2006; Petersilia, 2004; Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006). These inconsistent findings may indicate that while some reentry programming may be effective in assisting individuals with preparing for a release from prison, there are uncertainties in what types of programming may be the most helpful. These uncertainties may be a result of the lack of knowledge about reentry as a dynamic, individualized process.

Reentry as a Process

Reentry has been defined in the literature as the process of leaving prison and returning to society (Visher & Travis, 2003), but has often been examined less as an ongoing process and more in regards to discreet outcomes broadly classified into reentry "successes" and "failures'. Failure is often indicated by whether an individual recidivates (typically in regards to a re-arrest or re-incarceration) within an established follow-up period usually ranging from 1 to 7 years (Durose, Cooper, Snyder, 2014; Langan & Levin. 2002; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). Success, then, is often measured as desistance from criminal behavior and a lack of police contact within the defined follow-up period. As a result of this focus on reentry success and failure, a substantial portion of the earlier existing literature centered on identifying particular individual and community-level factors that are associated with these outcomes. Through this line of research, specific "risk" factors for recidivism or failure have been identified, such as unemployment, unstable housing, lack of social support, and continued substance abuse (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). Additionally, reentry success (again, often defined as desistance from criminal behavior or a lack of police contact) has been associated with steady employment, stable housing, positive social support, access to resources (such as counseling), and an internal motivation and confidence in themselves to remain crime free (Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000; Maruna,

2001; Leverentz, 2014). These identified risk and protective factors in regards to reentry success and failure have been used to develop risk and needs identification instruments as well as reentry programming curricula.

The flaw of focusing on reentry outcomes is that it fails to take into account the dynamic process of reentry and aggregates the entire reentry experience into one narrowly defined outcome. An individual coming out of prison either succeeds or they fail; they either desist from criminal behavior or they do not; they either have these risk or protective factors or they do not.

However, there is a body of research that challenges focusing too much on "outcomes" of reentry and conceptualizing desistance as a discreet event (Visher & Travis, 2003; Laub and Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Leverentz, 2014). "Making good" or going straight is described by Maruna (2001) as a maintenance process, versus a particular event or moment in time. Desistance should be studied as a continuity of (crime free) behavior, versus behavior change. "In terms of criminal offending, there is no great mystery as to why a person would choose to avoid crime...the bigger question is how ex-offenders are able to make good in the face of widespread social stigma, limited career opportunities, and social exclusion. Abstaining from crime under these highly criminogenic circumstances requires some explanation" (Maruna, 2001: 27).

Reentry, Desistance, and Persistence

More recent reentry research examines the individual reentry experience to better understand why some individuals struggle and others excel, despite the possession of various risk and protective factors. Indeed, there are already scholars who study reentry as a very personal experience that can only be understood through

formerly incarcerated individuals sharing their narratives (Maruna, 2001; Visher & Travis, 2003; Leverentz, 2014). Most individuals released from prison want to desist from engaging in criminal behavior, and many are optimistic that they will be able to do so. However, struggles with employment, stigma and social rejection, and negative interactions and perceptions of law enforcement result in an obstacle-filled, overwhelming reentry process. In Lerman and Weaver's (2014) examination of custodial citizens, findings reveal how these individuals experience a second-class citizenship where their experiences and expectations often do not align with the typical American ideals of democracy. They are usually disenfranchised, experience a loss of privacy and dignity, and are made to feel (or even explicitly told) that their voice or participation in society does not matter. Much of the stigmatization that they experience come from negative interactions with criminal justice actors or other "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980) representing the state. The authors found that many of these experiences and messages are internalized by custodial citizens, resulting in feelings of depression, hopelessness, shame, and isolation. Again, these feelings and experiences are not discreet events or quantifiable risk factors, they are ongoing social interactions occurring perhaps daily and therefore continuously shaping and impacting the reentry process.

Other studies of formerly incarcerated individuals' reentry experiences found similar themes of stigmatization and negative perceptions and experiences of law enforcement and other criminal justice actors. Maruna's (2001) study of "desistors" and "persistors" found that participants that continued to engage in criminal behavior identified the role of stigma and poverty, feelings of hopelessness, lack of agency, helplessness, and lack of legitimate opportunities as reasons for their continued

engagement in crime. Those that were maintaining a crime-free lifestyle attributed their success to a motivation to adopt a new identity and sense of self and to align their behavior with this new self-narrative. Additionally, Sampson and Laub (1990; 1993; 1995; 2001) have extensively documented the importance of various life events such as obtaining a stable job, getting married, and having children in whether individuals were motivated to maintain a crime-free lifestyle, discussing how these turning points impacted individuals' self-identity.

Other research has discussed the role that one's community plays in an individual's reentry process and their motivation and willingness to maintain a crime-free lifestyle. Maruna (2011) discussed the importance of "redemption rituals" in individuals' reentry processes. He states that social rituals serve an important function in our society in that they create an emotional and empowering experience by those actively participating in the ritual as well as a sense of belongingness and shared experience among community members. Maruna argues that while the punitive aspects of the criminal justice system are highly ritualized (such as the trial, the various techniques of dehumanization and identity-destruction that occurs within correctional facilities, etc.), there are no rituals for those who have completed their punishment and retuning back to society. These redemptive or reintegration rituals could help dispel stigma, signal a return of status as a full citizen, and forgiveness from the community. In Maruna's earlier work, the author found that participants who continued to desist from crime often spoke of these types of rituals, typically in the form of documentation of achievements (completion certificates, letters of commendation, etc.) and formal recognition of reform from respected community members. Participation in these rituals bolstered desistors' new self-narratives and

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motivated and empowered them to continue to engage in a crime-free lifestyle. Maruna suggests that if redemption rituals were institutionalized in the criminal justice system that they could potentially serve as "psychological turning points" (163) for those coming out of prison

Finally, other studies on the reentry process have found that some of the previously identified protective factors may be much more complex and dynamic than initially envisioned, and that there are other important factors that influence an individual's reentry process. For example, in a study on how parolees adjust following release from prison, Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris, and Fisher (2005) found that social support was only associated with positive reentry experiences in particular contexts, such as when friend networks resulted in assistance with securing employment, the level of tension and conflict within social relationships was low or non-existent, satisfying relationships with their children, relationships with non-crime involved family and friends, and supportive relationships with family members while still incarcerated. Additionally, research has shown that the experience of incarceration as well as parole itself play an influential role on individuals' perceptions of reentry and their actual experiences, particularly the impact correctional supervision has on the maintenance of social support networks and the ability to acquire educational and employment skills (Visher, & Travis, 2003; Bahr et al., 2005).

In sum, the study of reentry as a dynamic, ongoing process rather than a discreet event with particular outcomes has identified the highly personal and interactive experience that individuals go through following release from prison. Existing qualitative research in particular has identified that interactions with criminal justice actors, experiences of social rejection and stigma, and the development of

social bonds are not discreet events or outcomes of reentry, but continuous, fluid factors that impact individuals' day-to-day experiences and motivations to maintain a crime-free lifestyle or return to criminal behavior.

In the following sections I will describe in greater detail the each of the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness and how they have been examined in regards to reentry. Both social bonds and stigma have been studied in relation to reentry outcomes, and although more limited, the reentry process. The presence of legal consciousness in the reentry literature is much more limited, but has been discussed at least indirectly through discussions of interactions with criminal justice actors and perceptions of law enforcement or the government. Additionally, there is a small body of literature regarding legal consciousness and its relationship to experiences of stigma in other contexts such as immigration and welfare office experiences.

Social Control Theory

Social control theory is unique in that instead of attempting to explain why people choose to engage in deviant behavior, it is a theory that aims to explain why people choose *not* to engage in deviance. Further, it does not require any specific motivation for individuals to engage in deviant behavior, but assumes that individuals will engage in deviant behavior if they feel that they are free to do so (Hirschi, 1969). Also referred to as social bond theory, social control theory asserts that deviance occurs when an individual's bonds to conventional society are weak or broken. According to Hirschi, these bonds with society consist of four key elements: attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs, and the stronger these elements are, the more likely that the individual will refrain from engaging in deviance.

Attachment refers to the extent to which individuals have meaningful ties to other people, have admiration for these people, and identify with them and care about their expectations (Hirschi, 1969; Akers & Sellers, 2004). If someone has strong attachments, they likely share similar, often conventional, norms and values with the people they have attachments with. Also, if someone has strong attachments to others and cares about the opinions of these people, then they will be less likely to want to disappoint or deviate from others' expectations by violating shared norms. In other words, strong attachments allow for the internalization of conventional norms and values (Hirschi, 1969; Akers & Sellers, 2004). Hirschi stresses that strong attachments to parents and close peers are the most important bonds in preventing engagement in deviant behavior and that it is more the strength of the attachment, rather than the character of the attachments that determines whether an individual will engage in deviance.

The second bond that Hirschi identifies is commitment, which refers to the extent individuals are invested and engaged in conventional activities that could be potentially lost if they participate in deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969; Akers & Sellers, 2004). Education and occupational pursuits are the most common investments in conventional activities individuals engage in. Hirschi states that the greater the commitment to these conventional activities, the more likely the individual will refrain from engaging in deviance because the potential risk to their conventional investments is too high. Commitment assumes rationality on the part of the individual in that they will make a calculated, cost-benefit evaluation of whether they should engage in deviant behavior based on its potential negative consequences to their commitments (Hirschi, 1969).

Involvement refers to an individual's level of participation in conventional activities including going to work, attending and studying for school, extracurricular activities, hobbies, spending time with family, and attending community activities and events, including religious activities (Hirschi, 1969; Akers & Sellers, 2004). It is believed that if an individual has a high level of involvement in conventional activities that they will be too busy to engage in deviant behavior.

Belief refers to the "endorsement of general conventional values and norms, especially the belief that society's laws and norms are generally morally correct and should be obeyed," (Akers & Sellers, 2004: 118-119). Essentially, an individual needs to "buy into" the norms and values of society or hold the belief that these norms and values are legitimate. The less an individual believes in the rules of society, the more likely they are to violate those rules (Hirschi, 1969).

Social control theory has generally received empirical support with findings demonstrating that weaker social bonds are associated with a higher probability for engaging in deviance (Akers & Sellers, 2004). The strongest support has been for the element of attachment with less consistent support for commitment, involvement and belief (Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Robert, 1981). While most of the studies are focused on juvenile populations and delinquency, there have been applications of the theory on adult populations as well as examining the importance of social bonds for people re-entering communities following incarceration and its impact on recidivism.

Social Control Theory and Recidivism

As mentioned previously, recidivism rates for offenders are fairly high with national rearrest averages of around 40-60% within a 5 year follow-up period (Langan

and Levin, 2002). While social control theory was originally developed to explain why individuals choose not to ever participate in deviant behavior, it is important to understand how strong social bonds can be used to prevent returning citizens from engaging in future crime. Although findings on the effects of social bonds on recidivism have been somewhat inconsistent, there has been at least some research that finds strong social bonds are associated with a reduction in the risk to reoffend (Hepburn and Griffin, 2004).

Many of the studies on social control theory and adult returning citizens have used measures of strong social support (family, peer, and marital relationships) and job stability as indicators of social bonds. Formerly incarcerated individuals report that that these bonds play a significant role in their ability to adjust to conventional society following release from prison. A qualitative study by Breese, Ra'el, & Grant (2000) examined the importance of social support (which the authors stated involved the social bond elements of attachment, involvement, and commitment) on recidivism in a sample of adult, male returning citizens who have already been incarcerated at least once prior to their current imprisonment. The vast majority of the people interviewed described situations in which a lack of social support, particularly with family members, lead to difficulties in maintaining a crime-free lifestyle. The returning citizens reported feelings of shame and isolation as their families, following a "honeymoon" stage of welcoming them back, began to return to their daily routines and distanced themselves from the "ex-con" family member (Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000). As a result, individuals reported that it was extremely challenging to find opportunities (due to a lack of networking or assistance from family members) for employment, and that pressures from family members to be productive citizens and

contribute to the household often lead them returning to criminal activities as a way to earn money (Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000).

Research on the impact of criminal justice policies on reentry experiences has found that the collateral consequences of many policies aimed at "enhancing public safety" may in fact be contributing to recidivism risk due to their negative impact on the development of social bonds, particularly committment (employment and school) and community involvement. Kerrison (2014) found that "collateral consequence legislation" had a negative impact on formerly incarcerated individuals' ability to successfully reintegrate back into society, particularly for minorities and women. Restrictions placed on those coming out of prison, which have also been referred to as "invisible punishments" (Travis, 2002), can impact access to employment opportunities, affordable housing, welfare and other social benefits, student financial aid, the ability to vote, child custody, and more, all of which can negatively affect an individual's ability to develop meaningful bonds to conventional society (Travis, 2002; 2005: Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004).

Findings from quantitative research have also demonstrated the importance of social bonds on reducing returning citizens' risk to recidivate. A study of what differentiates successful parolees from those who ultimately reoffend examined various elements of social bonds including attachments with parents, other family members and friends, employment, engagement in pro-social activities, and marriage (Bahr, Harris, Fisher, & Armstrong, 2010). Findings indicate that while attachments to parents and marriage were not associated with successful re-entry, stable employment, strong social support from peers, and involvement in conventional, recreational activities with peers were significantly associated with re-entry success (Bahr, Harris,

Fisher, & Armstrong, 2010). The authors conclude that although the lack of association between attachment to parents and marriage are inconsistent with previous findings on the importance of these social bonds, their results provide at least partial support for the importance of social bonds on people's ability to successfully rejoin society.

Other research has demonstrated that social bonds may actually be the primary factor in determining whether someone is successful upon release from prison and that supervision and reentry policies and programs are only effective to the extent that they nurture the development of strong social bonds. MacKenzie and Brame (2001) asserted that traditional community supervision practices were only effective in reducing recidivism risk in their ability to facilitate development of social bonds by requiring offenders to participate in conventional, pro-social activities. Their study examined the effect of various levels of supervision intensity (requiring participation in therapeutic programming, maintenance of social support networks, and meeting family responsibilities) on the formation of social bonds and then the effect of social bonds on recidivism. The authors found that more intense supervision practices were indeed significantly associated with greater involvement in pro-social and conventional activities and that greater involvement in conventional activities was associated with lower levels of recidivism (MacKenzie and Brame, 2001). Relatedly, Sampson and Laub (1990) found that social bonds such as job stability, commitment to employment goals, and marriage were all associated with declines or desistance of criminal behavior across the life course in men whose deviant behavior was measured over time, starting when they were young adults and who had varying criminal trajectories. The development of particular social bonds in adulthood (such as securing

stable employment and getting married) had a significant impact in altering the criminal behavior trajectories of the young men, including those who had consistently engaged in crime from a very young age, and are often referred to as "turning points" in the life course literature (Sampson and Laub, 1990).

As Hirshi (1969) originally suggested, the elements of social bonds are not independent of one another and often interact, with one type of bond having an effect on one or more other bonds. Berg and Huebner (2010) tested the interactive effect of social bonds on a general population of returning citizens' risk for recidivism. Similar to other research on social bonds and recidivism, Berg and Huebner examined family attachments and employment on recidivism rates. Not only were the authors interested in the direct effects of each of these bonds on recidivism, but they hypothesized that strong family ties would indirectly impact recidivism rates through stable employment opportunities. Findings revealed that family ties were significantly associated with higher rates of stable employment among people released from prison. When examining the effects of family ties and employment on offender recidivism, results indicate that while family ties significantly reduced recidivism, once employment was included in the model, the effects of these ties were weakened and no longer statistically significant. The authors state that these findings suggest that the social support provided by family members may motivate returning citizens to immerse themselves in more conventional activities, such as employment (Berg and Huebner, 2010).

Taken together, these findings demonstrate empirical support for the importance of social bonds on returning citizens' success at reintegrating back into the community. However, it is important to consider the factors that may facilitate or

hinder an individual's ability to develop or maintain social bonds, particular involvement in one's community following release. Experiences of stigma as a result of the offender label, as well as perceptions and experiences regarding the law in their lives may both affect individuals' ability and willingness to develop ties to their community and buy into the values of conventional society.

Labeling and Stigma

Returning citizens occupy a unique and challenging position in society in that they have served their time for the criminal act they committed and have been released back into society as a free citizen, yet they continue to carry their deviant label with them. This label (ex-offender, convicted felon, etc.) has the potential to negatively impact various aspects of their daily lives including the individual's access to employment, housing, and support programs as well as developing positive social networks (Pager, 2003). As a result, these individuals may feel disconnected or isolated from conventional society, ultimately resulting in the individual rejecting conventional society and associating with those who have also been cast away by society due to their deviant label, increasing the likelihood of engaging in future criminality.

Classic Labeling Theory assumes that deviance is a label, not an act. It is the responses to an act that determine whether that behavior is deemed as deviant or not, and therefore whether someone is labeled as deviant (Lemert, 1951; Becker, 1963). In Lemert's work on primary and secondary deviance (1951), individuals who are formally labeled by society as deviant (i.e. criminals, ex-cons, ex-offenders, felons, etc.) are significantly impacted by the connotations attached to this label in how they shape their own identities, as well as how they and others perceive (whether accurate

or not) that label as having an impact on their ability to adopt or attain conventional roles and statuses in society (LeBel, 2012). Therefore, the stigma experienced as a result of a deviant label is based on the interactions the labeled person has with other members of society (Goffman, 1963). In Link and Phelan's (2001) review of how stigma has been conceptualized in social science research, they define the concept of stigma as a phenomenon that exists when several, interrelated components converge: 1) people must identify and label human differences between one another, 2) there must be a link between the label identifying these differences and a set of undesirable characteristics (negative stereotypes), 3) labeled persons must be "othered" so that there are distinct categories of "us" and "them", 4) labeled persons must experience some form of status loss and discrimination as a result of their label, and 5) the process of stigmatizing a person or group of persons is dependent on power relations that allow for such labeling, othering, and discrimination to occur (367).

In regards to individuals labeled as ex-offenders, the process of stigmatization identified by Link and Phelan is almost certain to occur due to the fact that these individuals are formally labeled by the criminal justice system (and therefore those in power have the ability and legitimacy to apply such label).The linkage to negative stereotypes, othering, and status loss is typically a condoned and even mandated aspect of receiving such a label. Individuals who are labeled as ex-offenders are often legally prohibited from securing certain social benefits and rights, employment and housing opportunities, and may even be subjected to public "othering" through the use of registries and community notification, such as the case of those convicted of certain sex offenses as well as methamphetamine-related offenses such as production and sales, and violent crimes (Homant & Kennedy, 1989; Loendorf, 2007; Wilson, 2013).

Therefore, unlike other stigmatized groups, whose stigmatization is more likely a result of societal attitudes and reactions to the difference being labeled (physical disabilities, mental illness, HIV status, etc.), ex-offenders are formally labeled by the criminal justice system, which may legitimize the stigmatization and resulting discriminatory behavior by members of society, or at least make the experience of stigmatization almost inevitable. Additionally, certain stigmatized groups in society, including ex-offenders, are faced with structural discrimination which has been defined by Link et al. (2004) as "institutional practices that work to the disadvantage of stigmatized groups and that allow extensive disparities in outcomes even when direct person-to-person enactment of discrimination is absent" (530). According to scholars, this institutionalized form of stigma-based discrimination is often overlooked because it occurs outside the model of person-to-person interaction (Link & Phelan, 2001, Link et al., 2004). Structural discrimination related to ex-offenders can include housing eligibility and employer hiring practices, social welfare benefit eligibility, student loan eligibility, and treatment resources often being under-funded, of lesser quality, and located in undesirable areas for this particular stigmatized group (Link & Phelan, 2001; Link et al. 2004). Related to literature on how stigma is conceptualized and the resulting discriminatory behavior that occurs, existing research indicates that members of stigmatized groups can perceive or experience stigma in three broad, but distinct ways: 1) the way in which an individual believes society thinks and feels about a particular stigmatized group (i.e. those with mental illness, formerly incarcerated individuals, people with physical disabilities), 2) the way in which an individual believes society views them personally as being a member of a stigmatized group (but could also include how they feel about themselves as a member of a

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stigmatized group), and 3) actual instances of stigmatization and discrimination as a result of membership in a stigmatized group (Link et al., 2004; LeBel, 2012). These three conceptualizations of stigma have been referred to in the literature as "perceived stigma", "self-stigma", and "enacted stigma" (LeBel, 2012; Luoma et al., 2007).

Despite theories of labeling and stigma existing since the 1950s, surprisingly there are very few empirical studies that explore the perceptions and internalization of stigma in ex-offender groups (LeBel, 2012), and those that exist focus almost exclusively on recidivism versus the reentry process. A study by Chiricos, Barrick, Bales, and Bontrager (2007) examined the effects of formal adjudication and convention (receiving a formal label of "deviant") on recidivism by analyzing reconviction rates of two groups of adult men and women: one group was formally adjudicated and found guilty (therefore having a "felon" label formally applied), and the other group that had adjudication withheld. The authors found that after controlling for crime type, criminal history, prior supervision violations, race, sex, and age, the odds of recidivism were greater for those who were formally adjudicated compared to those who were not, and that the formal label was especially harmful for those who would ordinarily be less likely to commit additional crime such as women, those who are white, older offenders, and those without prior criminal records. Others studies have found similar results in that the conviction (labeling event) was associated with increased recidivism rates compared to those who had adjudication withheld (Taxman & Piquero, 1998; Fagan, Kupchik, & Liberman, 2003).

Relatedly, research demonstrating the importance of transformation and desistance from criminal behavior illustrates the potential cost of possessing a stigmatizing label that is difficult to shed or even hide. Unlike traditional theories of

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desistance (Sampson & Laub, 1995) that state that certain conventional "turning points" such as marriage and securing stable employment are the primary factors in the desistance process, the identity theory of desistance posits that identity transformation must occur before any conventional social bonds can be developed or maintained (Bachman, Kerrison, Paternoster, O'Connel, & Smith, 2013). These studies have found that in order for individuals to successfully reintegrate into conventional society, which includes adopting pro-social connections and networks and engaging in conventional activities such as employment, individuals must first transform their identity from deviant to conventional. Other studies that have interviewed recently incarcerated men and women have found similar findings regarding the importance of establishing a new self-identity and the importance of adhering to this new narrative of the self (Maruna, 2001; Leverentz, 2014).

While this body of research typically looks at identity transformation in regard to an individual's willingness to want to move away from their deviant identity due to fear or the costs of such an identity (incarceration, death of themselves or others), it could be argued that stigma could play a prominent role in an individual's ability to shed that identity. Even if an individual is highly motivated to discard their former criminal lifestyle and identity and adopt an identity that more aligns with conventional social values, the formal label of "ex-offender" placed on them by the criminal justice system and the legally permissible stigmatization and discrimination that accompanies this label, may make it much more difficult for individuals to transform their identity. For example, individuals who are convicted of sexual offenses may face a lifetime of registration and community notification, therefore having their deviant label publically displayed, regardless of the conventional identity that they may have adopted for years

and even decades. These findings suggest that the offender label results in the experience of stigma and shame from being formally labeled by society could have a negative impact on an individual's ability to develop strong social bonds to conventional society. If the stigma surrounding the label as an ex-offender results in legally permissible or discriminatory restrictions to employment, housing, and social services, as well as difficulty in gaining or maintaining positive social support, then the development and maintenance of social bonds may be significantly impacted by the experiences individuals have with the stigma (actual or perceived) associated with their offender label.

The focus on the daily manifestations of stigma and how individuals respond to it is an understudied, but important area of empirical examinzation. Much of the limited literature on returning citizens' experiences of stigma focuses primarily on "counting" the types of stigma experienced and measuring its impact on various criminal justice related outcomes, such as recidivism. This is problematic, given the fact that the concept of stigma is often seen as a dynamic, interactive process that is specific to the individual that experiences it. Unfortunately, as Link and Phelan identify, "many social scientists who do not belong to stigmatized groups, and who study stigma, do so from the vantage point of theories that are uninformed by the lived experience of the people they study" (Link & Phelan, 2001: 365). If stigma is manifested and experienced through human interaction and observation, it would seem imperative that stigma be studied by observing and investigating the day-to-day lived experienced of stigmatized individuals. Link et al. (2004) assert in their research on stigmatization of individuals with mental illness that examination of more large-scale structural discrimination cannot be fully undertaken without understanding instances

of stigmatization that occur at an individual level, and encourage the use of ethnography to better capture these daily lived experiences. Therefore, in moving forward in research on the stigma experienced by returning citizens, it is essential to give voice to those who are members of this particular stigmatized group and to gain insight from their lived experience and the ways in which they encounter and respond to stigma in their everyday lives. For example, research on women engaged in sex work who were participating in prostitution court programming (and therefore formally identified and labeled as deviant by the criminal justice system) found that these women engaged in various "stigma management" strategies that include challenging the label applied to them as truly being "deviant", seeking out social support from others in similar situations, compartmentalizing their stigmatized identity as a prostitute from other aspects of their identity such as being a survivor and advocate, and engaging in socially "moral" behaviors of helping and supporting others as a way of distancing themselves from their deviant label (Shdaimah and Leon, 2014; Shdaimah and Leon, n.d.). While there is existing research that aims to give voice to those who are involved in the criminal justice system and to gain insight from their lived experience, this is certainly an area for additional study and exploration.

Legal Consciousness

Finally, the way in which individuals perceive, understand, and experience the law may shape how they respond to their label as an offender and the "weight" they give this label in their lives and their sense of identity, both of which may influence how individuals experience and cope with the stigma that may be attached to that label (Burris, 2006). In its most general sense, the term legal consciousness refers to the way in which individuals understand and experience the law and how those

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experiences and understandings are continually built and redefined (Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Silbey, 2005; Cowan, 2004; Neilson, 2000). Legal consciousness may manifest itself in how individuals discuss their "rights" in society, make claims, resolve disputes, perceive the accessibility and fairness of using the law to meet their needs or to receive "justice", and the attitudes held regarding actors within the legal arena (Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Silbey, 2005; Abrego, 2011; Nielson, 2000; Sarat, 1990). Legal consciousness has been studied within various marginalized social groups including same-sex couples (Hull, 2003), individuals with disabilities (Engel and Munger, 2003), residents of urban communities (Nielson, 2000), custodial citizens (Lerman & Weaver, 2014), welfare recipients (Sarat, 1990), and undocumented immigrants (Abrego, 2011).

Unfortunately, there is extremely limited research on the legal consciousness of returning citizens. This is a significant gap considering the ways in which individuals who are released from prison are immediately embedded into a web of legal rules, restrictions, and requirements. As a result of mass incarceration as well as the increase in community-based supervision practices (both in regards to probation and post-release supervision), there is an astounding number of individuals who must maintain regular contact with parole or correctional supervision officers and are subjected to a variety of supervision requirements and conditions, with failure to comply potentially resulting in revocation and re-incarceration (Phelps, 2013; Lerman & Weaver, 2014). Additionally, many individuals may also need to seek out social services for housing, food, and other assistance, navigate an obstacle course of both legal and employer restrictions on finding suitable employment, and engage with other legal services to address needs such as obtaining a driver's license, establishing child

support or custody, and attending mandated treatment or programming as part of their supervision requirements. In short, "the law" is very much embedded in most, if not all aspects of a recently released individual's life, yet there are no studies that explore the legal consciousness of those coming out of prison. In addition, the law presents a number of formal and informal exclusions to those with criminal records from full civic participation in society. Perhaps most well-known and documented, many individuals with a criminal record are formally disenfranchised by the law (although the conditions and length of disenfranchisement varies by state; Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004). However, Lerman and Weaver (2014) argue, "…by focusing solely on the ways in which felons are legally excluded from suffrage and other democratic rights and privileges, scholars have missed the more complex but no less crucial ways in which the lived experience of American citizenship has changed for a growing group of Americans" (7). The authors state that citizens come to learn about their government through their direct contact with it. Therefore, people's perceptions regarding government, citizenship, and belongingness may be influenced and directly shaped by their criminal justice involvement and interactions. In addition to a loss of suffrage, participants in Lerman and Weaver's research also described experiences of feeling that their voices aren't valued in democratic process, a loss of "freedom of association" (due to restrictions on where they can spend their time, work, etc.), the inability to serve on juries (and usually this exclusion is permanent unlike some disenfranchisement policies), and limitations on free speech (i.e. censorship of inmate or offender written articles and publications). Many participants recognized the formal equality they were supposed to have as citizens returning to society, but felt that their experiences did not align with such legal rights and that they were often perceived as

second-class citizens. As a result, participants described perceiving "the law" or the government as a controlling force, repressive, and untrustworthy, indicating that their interactions with criminal justice actors shaped their legal consciousness and perceptions of the law in general. Many reported that these feelings towards government made them socially disengage, regardless of whether they were legally restricted from civic participation. Also, some individuals stated that they chose to not take advantage of social aid programs like welfare and food stamps since these programs often cooperate with law enforcement by sharing records, allowing for "stings" to arrest those with warrants coming in to receive their benefits, and sharing of drug test results (Lerman & Weaver, 2014: 211) Participants also reported deliberate choices to not use the court system when they were victims of a civil wrong, due to repeated experiences of being treated (or told) that their voices, needs, or injuries did not matter. Thus, interactions with criminal justice actors and agencies impacted not only individuals' legal consciousness towards the law in general, but also resulted in feelings of isolation and social withdrawal.

Similarly, Alice Goffman's (2009) ethnographic work (although currently being challenged) about the experiences of the young black men living poverty in Philadelphia also illustrates the tremendous about of control the law can have on the lives of those living in inner-city poverty. One of the collateral consequences of the mass imprisonment of young black men is that many of these men are under correctional supervision, or are being highly scrutinized by law enforcement due to living in crime-ridden, high-poverty areas. As a result, many of these young men describe a constant fear that they will be locked up again and often avoid close ties with family and friends (due to pressures to report on one another when police come

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questioning or threatening to take people into custody), go to the hospital after a physical altercation, or call the police when they are a victim of a crime (again, due to fear of police assuming they are involved in criminal wrong-doing). Additionally, the law (particularly the criminal justice system) is so embedded in the lives of these men that legal terminology is often used colloquially, and the threat of contacting parole officers is used as a form of informal social control to reign in undesired behavior of family members and significant others (Goffman, 2009). Due to constant surveillance and threats of being sent back to prison, the law in these communities is viewed with contempt, distrust, and fear, feelings that greatly impact the well-being of the individuals who reside in these communities and the day-to-day interactions that they have with others. "Systems of policing and supervision have fostered a climate of fear and suspicion in poor communities-a climate in which family members and friends are pressured to inform on one another and young men live as suspects and fugitives, with the daily fear of confinement" (Goffman, 2009: 353).

Although not directly related to the experiences of individuals going through the reentry process, studies on the legal consciousness of those in poverty as well as undocumented immigrants reveal experiences and sentiments that could potentially parallel those of individuals being released from prison. In Sarat's interviews with individuals receiving welfare, participants reported that the law is "all over" and that they feel that they are constantly operating within some legal or administrative policy, procedure, or requirement. In particular, Sarat states that the legal consciousness of welfare recipients constructs the law as a source of power and domination, a force that they both try to resist, but also ultimately depend on for survival (1990). As Sarat aptly summarizes the experiences of those he interviewed:

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Legal rules and practices are implicated in determining whether and how welfare recipients will be able to meet some of their most pressing needs. Law is immediate and powerful because being on welfare means having a significant part of one's life organized by a regime of legal rules involved by officials to claim jurisdiction over choices and decisions which those not on welfare would regard as personal and private (344).

Sarat also highlights the feeling that some respondents had of being "caught in the web of legal rules" (353) to the extent that their sense of identity was almost entirely conflated with that of being a "welfare recipient" due to the frequent interactions with case workers and lawyers, waiting in social services offices, and being completely reliant on the resources provided. There is little room (physically or emotionally) to construct a sense of self that is separate from the experience of being a welfare recipient. Sarat's participants often felt that there was little value in resisting the experiences of shame, dehumanization, and discrimination they often experienced as result of their "welfare recipient" identity. At the end of the day, they still depended on the welfare system to meet their basic needs, and many felt the injustices experienced in the welfare system were simply reflective of larger social values that care little for individuals' plights unless they have power or money (Sarat, 1990). Those that do choose to challenge or resist the negative experiences and responses towards them as a result of their welfare recipient identity often do not have the opportunity or resources to target the power structure or those with the authority to change institutional practices, and instead are left lashing out at those directly in front of them who act as gatekeepers for the services and resources they need. As Susan Sered described in her essay on the "bitch in the welfare office", clients may often

identify the caseworker or front desk worker as the source of their stigmatizing experience, however, these workers often can only relay policy information or follow protocol, lacking authority to make higher-level decisions regarding the provision of services (Sered, 2015). These gatekeepers often do not have the authority to deviate from protocol or policy, but are unfortunately the face of the injustice, discrimination, and dehumanization that many welfare recipients (and those in similarly stigmatized groups) endure on a daily basis.

The depiction of the law as a controlling apparatus that is embedded in the lives of welfare recipients and impacts many of their daily decisions could also likely be said by those released from prison. Not only are their decisions and daily lives closely monitored and constrained through correctional supervision practices, they may often have to subject themselves to the legal scrutiny and web of bureaucratic and administrative policy in order to meet their most basic needs of housing, food, and health care. Ex-offenders often have little social or economic capital, and so the feelings of powerlessness to resist the law or construct an identity that is not centered on their status are likely similar to the feelings of those in Sarat's research labeled as "welfare recipients".

A related theme is also found in research that examines legal consciousness among undocumented immigrants in the United States. In Abrego's 1990 study of first generation and 1.5 generation (brought to the United States as children) undocumented immigrants, the author found that legal status played a significant role in how they viewed themselves and also how they interacted with (or against) the legal systems that impact their lives. Interview respondents identified feelings of fear and shame associated with their legal status as undocumented, and as a result, often experienced

exploitation, dehumanization, or discrimination in employment, school, and other aspects of their lives. They questioned which "rights" they had as undocumented immigrants and feared the potential consequences of claims-making. The real and perceived stigma experienced by undocumented immigrants, particularly first generation immigrants, had a profound impact on the way they thought about and used the law in their everyday lives, ultimately limiting their participation in mainstream U.S. society (Abrego, 2011).

There are differences between the status and experiences of undocumented immigrants and formerly incarcerated people, since technically, individuals who have been released from prison *are* fully recognized as citizens, but do have varying degrees of restrictions on their "rights". However, the experiences of stigma, fear, exploitation, and dehumanization are potentially felt similarly by those who identified as "ex-cons" in society and therefore designated as a being "less than" and "less deserving" compared to other social groups. In addition, claims-making (as a result of discrimination, exploitation, or other negative experience) is likely to be uncontested by ex-offenders due to their fear of the consequences it may have on their lives, such as their parole status and their already limited job prospects.

Also, for individuals with criminal records, the role of law may offer less protection against discrimination compared to other stigmatized groups (i.e. minorities, individuals with disabilities, etc.) and in some contexts (such as certain types of employment, and housing), may even permit or promote discrimination against those with felony convictions or particular offense types. For example, in the case of individuals stigmatized due to physical disability, race, or gender, the law has been used as a tool to promote the rights of individuals in these groups and to ensure

protections from discriminatory conduct by employers, business owners, and other actors. However, in the case of returning citizens, the law has formally permitted the discrimination of members from this group from access to certain opportunities and resources. Therefore, law may be seen not as a tool to protect oneself from discriminatory practices or stigmatizing experiences, but as an enabling and condoning force in the continued discrimination and social exclusion returning citizens experience. Thus, abstract perceptions regarding law's role in protecting from or promoting stigmatization may influence how likely an individual is to resist their ex-offender label and the negative connotations that accompany it (Burris, 2006). Related to more general orientations towards the law, an individual's overall perception of law's legitimacy or a general belief that it is favorable to be resistant to the law and that law violation is seen as respected or prestige-earning may result in the individual failing to perceive the negative reactions and attitudes held by conventional society about such labels, thus minimizing the harmful effects of internalizing the stigma attached to such a label (Anderson, 1994; LeBel, 2012).

In sum, legal consciousness studies on other marginalized groups in society such as custodial citizens, welfare recipients, and undocumented immigrants potentially shed light on what individuals recently released from prison may experience during their first few months of returning to their communities: feeling "caught in a web" of legal restrictions and requirements and powerless as they try to secure necessary resources and meet the conditions of their parole or supervision, uncertainty of their "rights" in society or ability to make claims when they encounter experiences of exploitation or discrimination, and the shame, fear, and stigma that often accompanies the label as an ex-offender. All of this may ultimately lead to less

engagement with and commitment to conventional society, as well as less buy-in or "belief" (Hirschi, 1969) in the values and expectations of conventional society. If the majority of an individual's experiences with the law resulted in negative outcomes or feelings of fear or distrust, then it is likely that they will not regard the law as fair, legitimate, or a resource to meet their needs. Since the legal consciousness of individuals released from prison may be related to their experiences with or fear of stigma associated with their offender label, some ex-offenders may choose not to seek legal action for a discriminatory or injurious experience. They may feel that by invoking the law to protect their rights they are formally recognizing themselves as a marginalized group or feel like they are forced make their ex-offender status publicly known (Engel & Munger 2003). Potentially paralleling what Engel and Munger found regarding identity and the American Disabilities Act, ex-offenders may choose not to invoke the law because it identifies them as a group that "needs protecting", thus perpetuating the inequality civil rights laws are aimed to eradicate. Ex-offenders may choose to handle disputes or injurious experiences informally or not at all because the use of the legal system may conflict with their sense of identity, as Merry found among working class New Englanders (Merry 1990). Some ex-offenders may have enough experience with the law that they are aware of the "paradox of legal entitlement", in that law is meant to be used by everyone equally and is a tool of empowerment, but in reality, the law removes an individual's control over their situation and is designed to protect the interests of certain groups more than others (Merry 1990).

Current study

It should be clear from the reviewed literature that the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness are potentially interrelated concepts that influence individuals who are returning to society following a period of incarceration. However, these bodies of literature are often isolated and uninformed by one another. Existing studies that examine linkages between these concepts, particularly legal consciousness and criminological theory, are extremely limited. Therefore, the current study aims to bridge criminological theory and law and society by examining the ways in which social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness may be related to one another. Specifically, this study intends to examine those critical first few months following release to understand how the legal consciousness of ex-offenders, perceptions and experiences of stigma, as well as the development and maintenance of social bonds, work together or individually to affect an individual's reentry experience. While there are no specific hypotheses or predictions, in keeping with qualitative inquiry, I have developed three research questions:

> RQ1: What are individuals' experiences with social bond formation, stigma, and the law following their release from incarceration?
>
> RQ2: How do the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness relate to each other and influence individuals' reentry experiences?
>
> RQ3: How do factors such as gender, race, and geographic location influence the reentry process?

The interview instrument is designed to collect information on each of these three questions through the stories and comments shared by the participants regarding their experiences during the first few weeks and months following incarceration.

Although the bodies of literature reviewed above do not explicitly "speak to" one another, I believe that the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness are indeed related to one another and therefore should no longer be examined in isolation. The reviewed literature made several implicit connections between these three concepts, such how undocumented immigrants experiences of stigmatization in school and work and the impact that has on how they choose to use the law to protect their rights, or how the embeddedness of the criminal justice system in the lives of custodial citizens impacts how much they are willing to form attachments with others and commitments to conventional society. Strong social bonds (i.e. stable employment, positive and supportive family relationships, involvement in prosocial groups such as church membership) may act as buffers to the perception and experience of stigmatization (LeBel, 2012; Leon & Kilmer, n.d.). The inability or unwillingness to develop social bonds may be partially explained by the feelings of disconnect, shame, and alienation experienced as a result of the stigma attached to the offender label. The understanding and use of the law by returning citizens may be better understood by examining how the offender label informs one's identity and conception of "rights". The implicit recognition of this in the existing literature, though not referenced explicitly by the authors, suggests that an integrated theoretical framework that combines each of these concepts is long overdue.

Additionally, a better understanding of the way in which ex-offenders think about and use the law in their everyday lives can provide important information about how our criminal justice and public policies impact, both positively and negatively, an individual's reentry experience, particularly within the first six months following release where recidivism risk is heightened. Findings from this project will shed light

on the real experiences, struggles, and successes of people coming out of prison during the initial weeks and months of returning home. It is hoped that the stories of these men and women will illuminate the ways in which families, communities, policy-makers, and society can assist these individuals as they try to begin their lives as formerly incarcerated adults.

As indicated by the research questions proposed, it is anticipated that the data collected from interviews with respondents will inform if and how these concepts interact with one another and impact the lives of those recently released from prison. A general model of these concepts and their impact on reentry could be as follows:

Figure 2.1. Theoretical model of legal consciousness, stigma, and social bonds' impact on reentry.
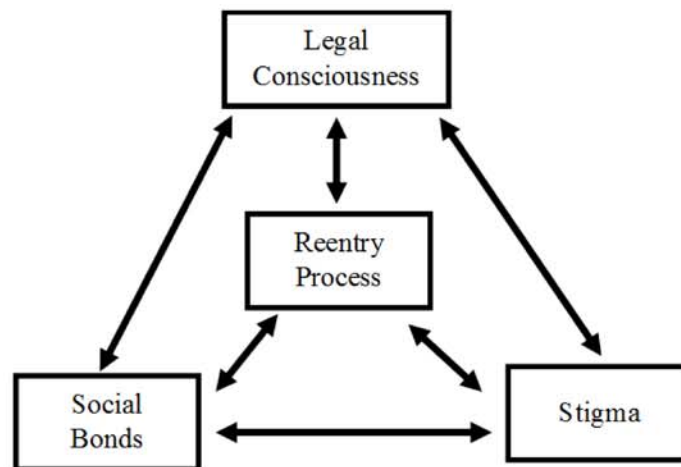
It is acknowledged that each of these concepts are dynamic and that the experience of stigma, the formation and maintenance of social bonds, and an individual's legal consciousness are all continuously being modified as a result of ongoing social interactions and experiences. This model is meant to serve as a guiding framework for understanding how these often non-integrated concepts may actually relate to one

another and significantly shape the experience of reentry in ways that have never been explored previously in either the criminological or law and society literature.

For example, the experience of stigma and the ability to develop or maintain social bonds are expected to influence one another. Those who are experiencing stigma and resulting shame from their offender label may be either officially excluded from certain areas of social life (i.e. particular fields of employment, residential areas, access to certain aid and benefits, etc.) or may feel unwelcome, regardless of whether they are actually prevented from participation (family gatherings, community events, etc.), thus making it less likely that they will develop bonds to conventional society in the form of pro-social attachments and community involvement due to anticipated rejection. On the other side, difficulty in developing or maintaining social bonds, particularly with individuals outside of immediate social circles or with the larger community may result in experiencing or perceiving greater stigma (and the accompanying negative emotions) due to feelings of rejection, isolation or disconnect from conventional society. Those who may have strong existing social bonds (supportive, pro-social family members, employment) may be protected by these bonds from experiences of stigmatization.

The relationships between legal consciousness and criminological concepts are less clear due to the lack of integrative literature, but it is speculated that perceptions of and interactions with the law will influence how one perceives and internalizes the stigma attached to their offender label. Individuals who have a resistant relationship with the law and unfavorable views of the law may choose to reject the formal labels that are given to them by the criminal justice system or may resist the stigma often associated with such labels. This would be in stark contrast to those who may have

great respect for the law and therefore may feel especially shamed to be given a formal, negative label by the criminal justice system, as evidenced in Chiricos et al.'s (2007) study of the impact of conviction--those who had no prior criminal involvement experienced much more "harm" from the labeling experience of conviction compared to those who had a history of criminal behavior. The experience of stigma may also have an impact on how an individual may perceive or experience the law. Those who are formally labeled by the criminal justice system and experience stigma may alter their perceptions of the law to view the law more negatively or become more resistant and against the law as a result of the negative feelings and experiences resulting from being formally labeled as deviant.

Legal consciousness is shaped by everyday experiences and interactions with law, and therefore interactions and engagement with conventional society is likely to impact how someone perceives and experiences law in their lives. An individual with strong bonds to conventional society in the form of social support, employment, and ties to their communities may experience the law more favorably than someone who has little to know bonds with others or society, particularly if that person perceives "the law" to be a component of the conventional society that they are not connected to. Conversely, individuals who are against the law and views law as representative of or an integral component of conventional society may feel less inclined to develop or maintain bonds to that conventional society due to their rejection of, or resistance to the law that embodies it.

Finally, for this project, reentry is conceptualized as a dynamic process that is shaped by the experiences and encounters individuals have in their daily lives, which in turn will impact an individual's perception of themselves, their connections to

society, and their attitudes towards the law. It makes sense then to consider that the relationships between legal consciousness, stigma, social bonds, and the reentry process as bi-directional, influencing each other through ongoing interaction and daily experience. For example, someone's daily encounters with criminal justice actors, family, and employers as well as their daily experiences navigating the demands and expectations placed on them (e.g. attending appointments, checking-in with their parole or supervision officers, dealing with restrictions and constraints on their behavior, etc.) will influence that person's experience of stigma regarding their offender label, their continued development or maintenance of social bonds, and their legal consciousness.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The analysis and findings from this project derive from stories and experiences of returning citizens shared through interviews with 43 men and women currently residing within the state of Delaware. Delaware was selected as the research site for this project primarily out of convenience, as it would allow me to conduct all of my interviews in person without enduring significant burdens on time or finances needed to travel greater distances. Fortunately, Delaware has unique features that made it an ideal site for this project. First, although small spatially and consisting of only three counties, there are distinct differences between the urban Northern county of New Castle, and the rural Southern county, Sussex (a more detailed discussion of the geography and its role on participants' reentry experiences will be discussed in chapter 6). Delaware is also a state that has received recent national attention for its exceptionally high recidivism rate. In a 2013 report released by the Delaware Criminal Justice Council, Delaware recidivism rates during a three-year follow-up period were a disconcerting 76.4%, nearly 10% higher than the national average (Delaware Criminal Justice Council, 2013; Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). These findings strongly suggest that individuals being released from Delaware prisons are encountering substantial obstacles and unaddressed needs compared to those released in other states. Therefore, an increased understanding in the experiences, needs, and concerns of individuals returning home from Delaware prisons may be of critical importance in determining how to address Delaware's elevated recidivism rates.

Sample Selection

I wanted to better understand the daily-lived experience of adult men and women who had recently been released from prison. Therefore, I initially aimed to limit my sample to only men and women who had been in the community for six months or less and had spent at least one year in prison prior to their release. I created these parameters for two reasons. First, I wanted to speak with people who had been removed from their communities for a length of time that made it likely that they may have experienced a weakening or loss of their existing social bonds such as employment, attachments with family members, and involvement in their community. Second, I wanted individuals who had been released recently enough that they could reflect on experiences and feelings regarding the first few days and weeks of their release in greater detail. Participants who had only been in their communities for six of fewer months were experiencing the initial reentry processes including reconnecting with family and friends, seeking out any needed resources including employment, housing, treatment programming, and social welfare services, as well as becoming acclimated to their post-release supervision requirements. In addition, recidivism reports indicate that a substantial number of individuals are most at risk to recidivate within the first six months to one year following release (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014), suggesting that these first few months following release may be the critical period in determining whether individuals will ultimately have a positive or negative reentry outcome. I did not constrain my sample by excluding anyone based on offense type, age (other than being 18 years of age or older), or any other characteristic.

Recruitment Strategy

I recruited participants through the four Department of Corrections Probation and Parole offices as well as one community-based reentry resource center located in New Castle County. I had planned to recruit from additional reentry programs and support groups, but was unable to gain access into these sites. Recruitment took place through: 1) the dissemination of recruitment flyers that were either handed out directly to returning citizens or placed in waiting areas for people to pick up[1] or 2) through in-person solicitation of individuals who were waiting for check-ins with their supervision officer or who were congregated in the lobby area of the reentry resource center. The second strategy was the more effective approach with all but two participants being recruited through in-person requests for participation, mostly done through frequent announcements about a paid research opportunity. I had a point of contact person at each probation office and the reentry resource center. This person was a staff member at the resource center and an I-ADAPT coordinator at the probation offices. It was through this individual that I scheduled days and times to be at the offices, found unused office spaces or rooms to conduct interviews, and who helped post recruitment flyers.

In order to create a sample of participants that resided throughout the state of Delaware (to examine the impact of geography on the reentry process), I limited the number of visits I made to each office within the three counties in order to minimize the risk of over-recruitment in any one county. This recruitment approach resulted in a sample consisting of 18 participants from New Castle County, 11 from Kent County,

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[1] Recruitment flyers had a phone number and mailing address for participants to contact the principal investigator and schedule an interview time.

and 14 from Sussex County, for a total of 43 participants. Due to challenges in recruitment of participants[2], purposive sampling in order to provide a balance of gender and racial groups was not feasible. Additionally, I was unable to adhere strictly to my parameters of less than six months since release and an incarceration period of at least one year. However, as you will see in the next section of this chapter, the majority of participants did indeed fall within these parameters.

Participant Characteristics

Participants were primarily men (n=33) and mostly identified as non-white (Black n=19; Hispanic n=18). The mean age of participants was 38 years, but ranged from 22 to 72 years old. The majority of participants were single (n=27), with 7 stating they were separated or divorced, 5 were in a relationship, and 4 participants were married (1 common law). Out of the 10 women in the study, 7 had children under the age of 18, and 17 of the 33 men had minor children.

Table 3.1. Participant Demographics.

Participant Demographics	N
Gender	
Women	10
Men	33
Race	

[2] There were several challenges to my recruitment process. First, participants had limited time to do interviews if they had already made transportation, employment or childcare arrangements that could not be altered. Second, the low compensation ($10) was likely little motivation to participate in an hour-long interview for some people. Third, there could have been reluctance to participate due to concerns of how their information would be used (or potentially used against them), given the correctional setting.

Black	19
White	18
Hispanic	6
Age	
Mean	38
Range	22-72
Relationship Status (Current)	
Single	27
Separated/Divorced	7
In Relationship	5
Married	4
Participants with children (< 18 yrs)	
Women	7
Men	17

Participants had a significant range of incarceration lengths with average period of incarceration lasting four years. The briefest incarceration was slightly under 3 months (76 days) and the lengthiest incarceration was 20 years.[3] Participants also varied substantially in regards to their time since release with time in the community ranging from 1 week[4] to 2 years, with 18 weeks as the average time participants had been in their communities following release from prison.

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[3] It should be noted that I only asked about the duration of their most *recent* incarceration. There were several participants who had been incarcerated multiple times and most recent incarceration may not have been their lengthiest.

[4] There was one participant, Chris, who had only been out for one day when I interviewed him.

Table 3.2. Length of most recent incarceration and time since release.

Incarceration and Release	
Period of Incarceration (months)	
Mean	48
Range	3-240
Time Since Release (weeks)	
Mean	18
Range	1-104

In regards to education, employment and housing, participants were generally highly educated with only 11 participants without a GED or high school diploma. Conversely, 10 participants had completed some college coursework[5] and 3 participants had college degrees. At the time of the interview 13, or approximately 30% of participants were employed full time with another 11 (25.6%) employed part time. Only 14 participants were unemployed at the time of the interview and 5 participants reported that they were retired, disabled, or on a fixed income. Finally, participants reported a variety of current housing situations, the most common being living with a family member (n=14). Thirteen participants were either homeless (n=2) or living in temporary housing or shelters (n=11). The remaining participants either had their own residence (n=9), lived with roommates (n=3), or were currently staying in a halfway or recovery house (n=4). A more detailed description of each participant can be found in Appendix A.

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[5] The percentage of participants who have completed college coursework or had college degrees is about two times the national average (23.3% versus 11.4%) for individuals incarcerated in state prisons (Harlow, 2003). This high number of participants completing coursework may in part be due to the implementation of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program which has courses in three correctional facilities in Delaware. Inside-Out course are college-level courses, but not every person may choose to receive college credit for completion of the class. For more information about the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program visit http://www.insideoutcenter.org/.

Table 3.3. Educational attainment, employment, and housing status.

Education, Employment, Housing Status	N
Education (highest completed)	
Less than High School	11
GED or High School Graduate	13
Vocational Training	6
Some College	10
College Degree	3
Employment	
Full-Time	13
Part-Time	11
Unemployed	14
Other (i.e. retired, disabled, etc)	5
Housing	
Has Own Residence	9
Lives with Family	14
Lives with Roommate	3
Halfway or Recovery House	4
Shelter or Temporary	11
Homeless	2

Participant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the 43 participants. Each interview was conducted in person at either a probation office (n=41) or community-based reentry resource center (n=2). Interview questions were open-ended and dynamic, covering topics such as reentry preparations and anticipations, experiences during the first days and weeks of release, accomplishments and challenges, social support, experiences of stigma, community involvement, and attitudes and experiences with the law (see Appendix B for interview guide). The questions were created with the specific intent of addressing the first two research questions identified in chapter 2, with the general experiences of reentry shared by

participants informing the third research question regarding the role of race, gender, and geography. The order in which topics were discussed was partly determined by the participant and the experiences they wanted to share. This conversational approach to the interview process allowed for participants to share stories or bring up topics on their own, some of which may not otherwise have been heard if I had followed the interview guide more rigidly (Rubin & Rubin; 1995; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The average length of these interviews was 42 minutes with interviews ranging from 19 minutes to 68 minutes in length. All but three participants consented to having the interviews audio recorded. Recordings were done using a digital recorder and audio files were transferred to password protected computers for transcription. All recorded interviews and field notes[6] were transcribed by the primary investigator. Upon completion of the interview, participants were each compensated $10 cash for their participation[7].

Prior to the start of the interview, all participants were provided a copy of the consent form to read, which was then reviewed with the participant and they were invited to ask any questions they had about the study in general or about specific

[6] While almost all of the analyses and findings for this project were taken from the interviews with participants, I did engage in several observation sessions of proceedings at the Reentry Court in Wilmington, Delaware as well as the Achievement Center, a resource center also located in Wilmington. Additionally, I wrote field notes about my observations in the probation office when I was not conducting interviews and any conversations that I had with probation officers.

[7] Two participants chose not to accept their compensation and requested that the money be donated to a charitable organization instead, with one person requesting specifically to donate the $10 to an animal rescue and the other did not specify. I donated both $10 payments to the Delaware Humane Association under their pseudonyms.

aspects of their participation. Once participants were clear on the purpose of the study and what they were asked to do, they were requested to provide consent to participate in the interview, to audio record the interview, to have quotes of their interview shared in publications, have audio clips of their interview shared in online publications, and be contacted in the future for follow-up research (participants could consent or decline any of these individual requests). Once the consent form was signed, participants were asked demographic questions (see Appendix C) and were able to select the pseudonym they wanted to use for their interview. In all but two cases I used the pseudonyms that participants chose for themselves when referring to their stories in the results chapters.[8] Many participants selected names of family members or friends they respected or historical or fictional characters they identified with. It allowed them to express themselves or honor an individual[9] they felt a connection with. This approach is consistent with the goal of sharing the voice of this particular group of individuals, by allowing them to select a name that was meaningful to them versus assigning a random name to their stories.

It is important at this point to discuss the physical location of the interviews. In all but two cases, interviews took place in probation offices. The amount of privacy the participant and I was provided varied by each office. Two offices allowed me to

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[8] In the two cases where I chose to substitute the participant's chosen pseudonym for another name, one had selected a conventionally "feminine" name although he identified as a male (he selected this name jokingly) and therefore "Lucy" became "Lucky", and the other individual had chosen the label "Dolphin's Fan" which I took letters from and created the name "Don" instead.

[9] While I did not document this behavior, I do remember that at least two individuals selected a friend or family member who had passed away as a way to honor them.

use an empty office space or conference room to conduct interviews and permitted me to close the door during the interviews to increase privacy. One office permitted me to use an empty office space but required that the door remain open, and probation and parole officers were able to walk freely past this office throughout the interview process. The most restrictive office[10] required me to conduct interviews in an empty office with the door open and a probation officer sitting in the office across the hall. The officer across the hall as well as anyone walking down the hall easily could have listened to the interviews that took place. As a result of the overall context of where the interviews took place (within probation offices) and the degree to which probation officers could potentially overhear conversations, it is certainly possible that participants skewed towards presenting positive information and experiences, for fear of any negative consequences if they were overheard speaking poorly about their probation officer, post-release supervision requirements, or other criminal justice-related issues.

However, the tendency to share stories that emphasized accomplishments, positive relationships with probation officers, and a high degree of motivation to be successful in their reentry and not return to engaging in criminal behavior could also be attributed to how participants were constructing their narratives about their release.

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[10] The probation office that was the most restrictive regarding the location and degree of privation of my interviews was also the only office where my point of contact was male. It is unclear whether the restrictions on privacy were due to legitimate office policies (the office doors did not have windows and this was cited as the reason for the door remaining open during interviews), or whether there was a gender bias that took place at this probation office with the male point of contact behaving in a more paternalistic or protective manner (despite the need to keep a door open, the rational seemed unclear as to why I always had to interview in an office that was across the hall from his office) than the female point of contacts at the other offices.

Prior qualitative research, particularly with marginalized groups, has stressed the importance of recognizing that the narratives people provide are socially constructed. The way people choose to share accounts of their lives reflects an individual's personal identity and the way in which they make sense of their own experiences, as well as the way they want to "perform" that identity to others (Goffman, 1963; Schultz, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). Regarding returning citizens in particular, Maruna (2001) has demonstrated the role of positive self-narratives on individuals' personal transformations and desistance from crime. It seems reasonable to suggest that part of the motivation behind returning citizens' positivity could be that they have constructed a redemption script (87) that they are using to motivate themselves to "make good" (Maruna, 2001) and convince those around them that they are indeed engaging in a crime-free lifestyle.

Data Analysis

A Grounded Theory Approach

I used a grounded theory approach for this study, which allows for data collection and analysis to occur simultaneously (Charmaz, 2006). This permitted me to identify emerging topics that could then be included in the interview guide through follow-up questions. For example, the original interview guide did not specifically ask about experience with police officers, but about the criminal justice system more broadly. However, during initial interviews participants repeatedly shared accounts of their various interactions with police or attitudes towards law enforcement, which I then began to ask about specifically in subsequent interviews. Additionally, a grounded theory approach was appropriate not only because I am interested in the

subjective daily experience of reentry as a process and the dynamic relationships that may exist between the project's key concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness, but also because there is little existing literature that has examined the linkages between these concepts, particularly in regards to legal consciousness. Therefore, a lack of pre-established hypotheses or predictions[11] allowed for a more thorough analysis of the relationships these concepts had with one another since I was not "blinded" by seeking out (or ignoring) particular relationships between these concepts based on assumptions drawn from existing literature. Although I have presented a model that illustrates how these concepts *may* be inter-related, I did not predict any particular relationships or specific influence these concepts may have on one another. Rather, I chose to let the data collected through my interviews and observations inform not only the data collection process, but also the theories and findings that ultimately emerged (Glaser and Strauss, 2009; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Shdaimah, 2009). I used NVivo, qualitative data analysis software, for the coding and analysis of interview and field note data.

Analytical Strategy

I first engaged in initial coding which lead to the creation of a coding frame that was continuously revised as new themes emerged in the data (Charmaz, 2006;

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[11] I did however develop research questions that were identified and discussed in chapter 2. The use of pre-existing research questions is potentially in tension with one of the tenets of the grounded theory approach in that the research process should be the primary source for developing research questions and theoretical explanations. It is also important to note that my research questions are not derived solely from the literature, but are deeply informed by my prior involvement in the correctional field as a researcher, program facilitator, and teacher.

Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Berg, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). During initial coding, I went through interview transcripts line-by-line and coded for concepts, ideas, or phrases in order to find emerging patterns in the data (Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2006). I chose to engage in this initial coding to allow the data to provide the codes, following a grounded theory approach to analysis, versus beginning the analytical process with a pre-existing set of codes (Charmaz, 2006). This initial coding was done for the first ten interviews and resulted in the creation of a coding frame that I then used to aid in the coding of the remaining transcripts. As I continued to develop a coding frame through line-by-line coding of each newly transcribed interview, I went back to the earlier transcripts and reviewed them, coding them a second time using the coding frame that was developed, in order to capture any information that was initially not coded. Using this technique of building a coding frame from the data ensures that any findings and relationships were truly based on the data. I continued to review the data throughout the analytical process, either parsing out broader codes into more specific ones (ex. "source of stigma" was parsed into particular sources such as family members, peers, police, etc.), or aggregating overly-specific codes into broader, thematic codes. Throughout the analysis process, I engaged in memo-writing as a way to begin to organize emerging themes and theoretical relationships found in the data (Charmaz, 2006).

I made a point to regularly incorporate validity checks into the analytical process, primarily making sure that I was staying open to evidence that may contradict themes that had emerged from the research, and relatedly, not allowing my analysis to become informed by findings in the literature, thus violating the tenets of a grounded theory approach. This was challenging at times, as it is easy to make assumptions

about what will be found in the stories of recently incarcerated men and women, such as finding evidence of stigmatizing experiences, as these are the narratives we are exposed to most often. However, by allowing myself to remain open to contradictory information I was able to find interesting and unexpected relationships between theoretical concepts.

Crisis of Representation and Reflexivity

Throughout this project I was aware of the role my own identity and beliefs may play throughout the research process as well as the power dynamics between myself and participants (Anderson, 2009). The crisis of representation therefore explores how accurately (or perhaps authentically) researchers present the material they obtain from their participants (Anderson, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It is inevitable that I approached this project with my own set of values, experiences, and beliefs, including certain assumptions or beliefs in what policies and issues "should" have an impact on someone's reentry process. This could have affected how I followed-up to statements my participants made or how I coded and interpreted the content of their interviews (King & Horrocks, 2010). Additionally, research on the issue of social dynamics in interviewing has found that status marks such as race, class, and gender do indeed impact the interviewer-participant relationship and resulting information that is shared or withheld as well as the participants' perception of the researcher's credibility and legitimacy (Manderson, Bennet, & Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2006; Jacques & Wright, 2008). Both the participants and I could have intentionally or unintentionally engaged in self-censorship and performance during the interview session as a result of the social distance between the two of us creating

discomfort or distrust, resulting in a loss of authenticity of the interview and information being shared (Yanos & Hopper, 2008; Sword, 1999).

I engaged in several strategies throughout the research process to help minimize the misrepresentation of the information shared by participants. The first has to do with how the interviews were conducted. I chose to dress casually for interviews, similar to the participants, to minimize the appearance of power differentials between us and maintained casual and friendly body language throughout the interview. Additionally, I allowed participants to control the conversation whenever possible (without completely discarding the interview guide) and answer questions in the order they chose. I made sure to ask probing questions to seek clarification about particular stories that were shared. This provided participants with the opportunity to confirm, revise, or disagree with how I was interpreting the information they shared with me. I also engaged in frequent journaling or reflexive writing to document any instance where I felt myself or the participant had engaged in performance during the interview or said or did something that could have impacted the interview process (for example, I documented instances when participants were flirting with me or when it seemed obvious that they were trying to share information that they felt would impress me). Finally, I tried to present the actual stories shared by participants in the write-up of research findings. This allows the reader to see actual quotes from a particular experience or participant, rather than my interpretation or retelling of those same stories. Each of these techniques either reduces power and status differentials between the respondent and myself or shifts the power to the respondent altogether (Manderson, Bennet, & Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2006; Sword, 1999).

It is inevitable that my own biases and assumptions influenced how I related to respondents, conducted the interviews, and interpreted the data. However, by actively engaging in reflexivity about the role my social position may have played during the data collection and analysis process, documenting my feelings and thoughts regarding these issues, and creating opportunities to empower participants and reduce social distance, I felt I was able to engage in this project and share the experiences of those who participated with authenticity and validity.

Chapter 4

SOCIAL BONDS, STIGMA, AND LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THEIR DIRECT IMPACT ON THE REENTRY PROCESS

Introduction

This first chapter of results examines social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness as independent concepts that shape the reentry process for men and women recently released from prison[12]. Participants shared experiences that identified the role each of these concepts have played in the way they navigate through the various legal and social obstacles they encountered during their first weeks and months following their release. Many of these stories provide additional evidence to support previous empirical findings on the reentry process, particularly in regards to the roles of social bonds and stigma. This chapter also sheds light on the ways in which the legal consciousness of returning citizens shape their interactions with legal actors in the community, a topic that is less explored in the existing literature. Before discussing the primary theoretical concepts, I want to begin this chapter with a brief examination of the various ways in which individuals prepared themselves for their release from prison, their excitement and concern regarding their return to the community, and their experiences and emotions from that first day out. I will then move on to discuss the roles of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness and the more direct impact these concepts had on individuals' reentry experiences.

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[12] Chapter 5 will discuss the various inter-relationships between these theoretical concepts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their role in the reentry process.

Release from Prison: Preparations, Anticipation, and "First Day Out" Experiences

"It starts when you're in prison": Preparing for Release

> It starts when you're in prison. Giving inmates the skills so when they get out, they'll have something to offer in society, to pay taxes, contribute to the state, and county. You know what I mean? (John)

People who participated in this project engaged in a variety of reentry preparations while they were still incarcerated. Some individuals discussed formal programming resulting from their sentencing such as drug treatment and mental health counselling, while others discussed their efforts to sign-up for voluntary programs and workshops ranging from vocational training, institutional jobs within the facility, education classes, and courses on specific topics such as coping with trauma, parenting, and conflict resolution. Those who were involved in long-term programs and therapeutic communities indicated that "reentry" was a part of the curriculum in these types of programs with discussion and learning topics devoted to such issues as resume building and interviewing skills, managing finances, and building positive, supportive social networks.

In addition, all but a select few of those I interviewed for this project were enrolled in Delaware's Individual Assessment, Discharge and Planning Team, or I-ADAPT Program. This state-wide program began in 2009 with the aim of providing individuals nearing release from incarceration an individualized release plan that includes services and resources in the areas of housing, employment, human services, education and community integration (Markell, 2009). The I-ADAPT process begins when individuals are still incarcerated, typically in the form of workshops held by an

I-ADAPT coordinator (often through Probation and Parole) that explains the services and resources that I-ADAPT can provide participants. Some of the more notable services include securing primary documents such as birth certificates, social security cards, and state-issued identification cards while the individual is still incarcerated so that they have these documents upon release, something that greatly expidites the process of applying for employment and social. While potentially useful, there is no requirement for individuals to use the services offered by I-ADAPT and therefore, while many people may attend the workshop, they are under no mandate to take advantage of the services and resources provided.

Returning citizens expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with the types of programs that were available to them while they were still incarcerated. Some voiced appreciation for the opportunities and resources that were available to them and sincerely believed that the programs they participated in, particularly I-ADAPT and the Key (substance abuse treatment therapeutic community) programs were helpful in their reentry process thus far. Other individuals, like Alvin, discussed how they signed up for any program that was available to them as a way to collect as much information as possible or to simply pass the time, regardless of how ultimately helpful these programs were.

> Any program they have, I'm there. Not only I did it, but I repeated again. I completed them and then I ran out of programs so I go back again and do it again. (Alvin)

While in the minority (less than a quarter of all participants), there were some who felt that the programs and services offered in prison were not useful to them since their release from prison.

None of the programs in there are helpful for anybody. Honestly, I already know what my issue was. It would have been a waste of their time and mine to even try because I already knew going in what I was going need to do as soon as I get out. (David)

David felt that the programs he had completed during his prior incarcerations provided no new information or insights about his behavior or other issues that he was not already aware of. Others who held similarly negative impressions of the in-prison programs expressed an inability to relate to the material or the staff member running the programs, or a lack of practical information about reentry, particularly in regards to housing and employment resources.

Those who stated that they did not receive any formal reentry programming while incarcerated, or did not feel the programs they did complete adequately addressed reentry issues, often prepared for their release independently. They typically sought out information on community resources, inquiring about employment and housing opportunities, contacting family members regarding employment, housing, and financial needs, researching legal information in regards to child custody, and soliciting advice and information from others who were incarcerated about probation expectations. In addition, many participants stated that they engaged in self-reflection in order to mentally prepare for their release by setting goals and developing timelines and strategies to achieve those goals. For many of the people I spoke with there was a clear motivation to lay out a path for "success" and to identify how to remain on that path once they were actually back in the community.

"Just the Little Things": Anticipating Release

When asked what they were most looking forward to upon release, people overwhelmingly stated that they were looking forward to seeing or reconnecting with

family or loved ones. In particular, parents were eager to see their children, some of whom had not seen their children since they had been incarcerated.

> Interviewer: Were there any things that you were looking forward to or excited about?
>
> Anastacia: Seeing my kids. Very much seeing my kids. I couldn't wait to see my kids.
>
> <div align="center">*****</div>
>
> Interviewer: So you were able to reconnect with [your daughter] the very first day you got out. What was that like?
>
> Andrew: It was better than having my freedom.
>
> <div align="center">*****</div>
>
> Interviewer: Did you get to see her while you were locked up at all?
>
> JB: No. I wouldn't allow it because it's like no contact or the glass typed thing.

Others were anticipating having physical contact with their loved ones since certain visitation restrictions often prohibit any form of physical affection, including hugs and even handshakes.

> Interviewer: Were there certain things that you were really looking forward to and excited about coming home?
>
> Don: Hugging my mom.

In addition to reconnecting with children and loved ones, people often stated that they were looking forward to "the little things" that are taken for granted when not incarcerated, such as being able to open and close doors, go outside, eat favorite foods, and as one person

stated "mow my own lawn".

> Being able to get in a shower without having to wear shoes on my feet, being able to go to the refrigerator when I'm hungry… The opportunity to be able to actually work all week and earn a paycheck. (Rob)

<div align="center">*****</div>

> Touching carpet for the very first time because everything in there was concrete. So touching carpet, touching a glass, eating off of silverware, a plate, being able to open up a refrigerator, cooking your own food, washing your own clothes, sleeping on a comfortable bed with a nice pillow. (John)

For these men and women, it was the small, what some of us may even consider insignificant, "freedoms" and comforts that were the most missed. The ability to experience these everyday liberties seemed to make people feel whole again, like a person versus a prisoner.

With the excitement of their anticipated release, there was often anxiety as well. When asked what they were most concerned or anxious about in regards to their release, every person reported at least one issue or obstacle that they were concerned about having to navigate following their release from prison. The primary concern expressed was the ability to find a job or stable housing. This is consistent with other research that examines the concerns and needs of people coming out of prison (Travis, 2005; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999; Visher, 2007; Travis & Visher, 2005; Harding, Wyse, Dobson, & Morenoff, 2011). They also voiced anxiety about how employers, family members, and their larger communities would perceive them due to their criminal background and felony conviction. Many anticipated facing stigma from these sources which could lead to difficulty in obtaining employment, housing, and social support and acceptance. Finally, people shared their concerns about "staying out" and navigating the various legal requirements expected of them as a result of their probation or supervision, as well as expressed uncertainties they had about what their

probation officer would be like and how that relationship would work. These responses were often directly related to the concepts of building social bonds, experiences of stigma, and their legal consciousness, which will be discussed more directly in later sections.

"It was like heaven. It was freedom. I loved it.": The First Day Out

> The first thing I did was lay right on a piece of carpet, just to touch the carpet and it was just awesome. I'll never forget it. Never, ever forget it. (Don)

I asked each person that interviewed to tell me about their first day out of prison and the responses were some of the most emotionally charged of any experience described throughout the entire interview. Over half of the participants began their response with an inhale of breath, a sigh, or some other audible expression of emotion before describing their first day out of prison. The emotional responses were wide-ranging in type, but most individuals described a very intense emotional response to their release. Only about a quarter of individuals voiced feelings of joy and relief, like Clifton who described his release as "It was like heaven".

> It's beyond words actually. I'm at awe right now, like I couldn't even describe the feeling. (Rico)
>
> *****
>
> It was a relief. It was a true relief. (Mega)

Most people however described their first day out as an "emotional roller coaster" or "overwhelming", sometimes expressing doubt as to whether they would be able to manage the expectations and challenges of reentry.

> "I was overwhelmed in the beginning. I cried the whole first month" (Cookie).
>
> *****

I got caught up and I lost everything. I know how hard it was to get all those things and now, I'm trying to get it back, but it sucks sometimes, but I try to let the thoughts, leave the thoughts alone because it gets you overwhelmed. (Terry)

*****

You just feel overwhelmed. I kept telling myself, it won't always be this way. It just won't always be this way. (Dominic)

In fact, the use of the word "overwhelmed" to describe the first day out experience was the most common emotion expressed by individuals, with nine people using that term specifically when describing their first day of release. These sentiments are consistent with other research that has examined the experiences of returning citizens (Kenemore & Roldan, 2006; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999) and found that people coming out of prison often express anxiety, self-doubt, and feeling overwhelmed. Approximately half of the men and women in the current study stated that they experienced anxiety or fear on their first day out, some voicing extreme and even suicidal feelings.

I was frightened to death. It was like they were throwing me into a bottomless pit. I was thinking of work. How am I going to get work because you got to have some place to live? There's this thing called food. (Ernie)

*****

A little bit of me I didn't want to leave. It was sort of like Stockholm Syndrome. I felt like I'm safer in prison. You know what I mean? Even though I hated being there, but I just felt safer. I felt like that at any minute a guard was going to shoot me for escape, that's how I felt when I was in the car. (John)

*****

Suicidal. I was a little suicidal because I was scared. I was scared nervous. (Cassie)

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It is important to recognize these emotional responses to release because it humanizes the experience of reentry, a theme that sometimes is considered by scholars and policy-makers as an abstract construct consisting of achievements and failures, or risks and protective factors used to predict recidivism. However, for these men and women, it is a personal, emotional process, often kick-started by intense experiences of fear and anxiety. It was evident that these individuals recognized the challenges that they were facing in regarding to returning to society. Many of the concerns expressed by these men and women had to do with their ability to find employment and social support, manage experiences of rejection and exclusion due to their criminal background, and navigate the expectations and requirements of their post-release supervision, all of which are related to the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness, which will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

Social Bonds

Commitment to Legitimate Employment Opportunities

As discussed in chapter 2, social bonds are the connections that individuals form with conventional society that, if weakened or broken, make it more likely for an individual to engage in deviant or criminal behavior (Hepburn and Griffin, 2004; Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000; Travis, 2002; 2005; Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004). When discussing individuals who have already engaged in crime and are returning to their communities, the formation and maintenance of social bonds can be critical for sustaining a crime-free lifestyle following release from incarceration. However, the very nature of incarceration, the removal of an individual from conventional society for a period of time, is likely to weaken or break any existing bonds the individual has,

and the longer an individual is removed from society, the likelihood that these bonds are further weakened increases. Furthermore, some individuals may have never formed bonds to conventional society prior to their incarceration, having lived in an environment where opportunities to participate in conventional society were limited or non-existent, and survival depended on engaging in a lifestyle of crime. Alvin told the story of growing up as a child in a rough area in Puerto Rico where there was intense pressure to become involved in gang activity as a means of survival and family protection.

> I was born here but I went to Puerto Rico because my mom separated with my dad. They took me to a place, she told me it's going to be better for us but then I realized it, it was bad. Um, it was two groups they used to come and tell you straight-if you was a man, if you was a kid, um, if-if you come with us, we'll protect you. If you don't, we'll kill your family. So it was a bad one. It was two, one would say, we'll protect you from that one, ones that threaten you, you just be with us. So it-there was no other choice.

Other people discussed how they had never held a legitimate job due to getting involved in drug sales at such an early age or other deviant methods to earn income or resources such as clothing and food. As a result, they didn't have an employment history to provide on a resume, and were anxious about interviewing for a legitimate job, working for a supervisor, and not making a mistake or getting fired. Despite their inexperience however, people genuinely wanted to participate in conventional society rather than return to their previous lifestyle, acknowledging that they likely would have to adapt to having limited financial means.

> Trying to get used to living within my means. Trying to get used to having nothing to working for something. Had to get used to knowing where you are and where you're headed. Getting the right things, the right way. (Andrew)

For Andrew and the eight other individuals who also spoke directly to having limited income or financial support, there is an acknowledgment that it is a challenge to meet financial obligations, whether it was monthly bills, child support payments, or fines and restitution.

Of the 43 men and women that I interviewed, only about half of them were employed at least part time, and less than a quarter had full-time employment at the time of the interview. Table 4.1 provides a description of individuals' employment status at the time of the interview.

Table 4.1. Employment status at time of interview.

Employment Status	N
Full-Time Employment	14
Part-Time Employment	10
Unemployed, currently seeking	10
Unemployed, not seeking	4
Disabled	3
Retired	1
Fixed Income	1

It was overwhelmingly evident in the interviews that employment opportunities were often dependent on the social connections participants had in their communities, both prior to and following incarceration. Of the fourteen people who had full-time employment, ten used their social networks to secure their job and the majority of the participants who were employed part time sought employment referrals through contacts they made in their community-based treatment groups and reentry programs, such as NA/AA, I-ADAPT, the Achievement Center (community-based reentry program for men that provides resources and assistance for housing, employment, and

counseling), and the Aftercare program (follow-up program for those who received in-prison substance abuse treatment programming).

> …There was a guy that's in the recovery and goes to the AA/NA groups that I go to, he's like the foreman that runs all jobs and he was like, "Man, if you want, I'll get you a job where I'm at" and I went and talked to the guy and they hired me. I started working pretty much instantly… (Randolph)

Three individuals who had prior work experience found that their former employers were willing to hire them back once they were released. One person, Marie, actually reached out to her former employer prior to her release in an effort to maintain that connection so that she could get her job back once she returned to her community.

> …when things started happening and I knew that I was gonna return back to jail I was like, listen, this is what is going on with me, I don't know how long I'll be here, Um, and I was just honest, and I had actually wrote them while I was incarcerated, I got the address and I wrote them and I told them because I worked for them for 11 months before I got incarcerated, so there was a bond that was formed between all of us and they were willing to give me my job back.

Marie and the two other people who were able to return to their previous jobs demonstrate the benefits of having strong social bonds, in this case, prior work history, on the ability to gain stable employment following release from prison. In contrast, those who were still unsuccessful at securing employment lacked some of the social connections that more successful participants were able to utilize to gain employment opportunities. They also tended to lack prior work experience or the vocational skills required for the jobs they applied to. As a result, these individuals described feeling anxious, hopeless, and frustrated that they were unable to meet this basic need and expectation of their reentry.

A Commitment to Commitment: Acceptance of low-paying or part-time work

People shared how the importance of being a part of conventional society was so great that they were willing to work in jobs that many of us would consider undesirable due to the unpleasant conditions and menial pay. Aware of the fact that for many, their criminal background, low educational attainment, or lack of job experience precluded them from certain employment opportunities, individuals accepted, and many indicated gratitude, jobs at chicken processing plants, warehouses, and fast food restaurants.

> I have no problem with detailing cars. I will wipe a bumper off for 8.50 until I get something better. And that's the set, I'm not one of those guys, I don't need up to $40 an hour in my lifetime, but I never worked on any $15 a day in my life, but I will because I got to, my pride is not going to get in the way. (Phil)

> *****
> It's not that I'm proud and I don't want to work for somebody cleaning toilets or washing dishes, that's not me. You have to crawl before you walk and I've been there before and I'll do it again and, you know what I mean? (John)

This acceptance of a menial or undesired job is inconsistent with prior research that has found that women involved in street work chose to engage in illegal prostitution that was more financially beneficial than to work a low-paying, conventional job that would not be able to meet their financial obligations (Shdaimah & Leon, 2014). Some individuals discussed having to walk to their jobs due to lack of transportation or limited operations of buses during overnight or early morning hours. One person stated that he walked nine miles to and from work, which took almost 3 hours, resulting in him often arriving at work already physically drained. However, this person and others expressed an appreciation and gratitude for having found a job, despite it being a one that they did not particularly want.

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In addition to itself being a critical bond for reducing the likelihood of returning to criminal behavior (Bahr, Harris, Fisher, & Armstrong, 2010; Sampson & Laub, 1990), employment was often a necessary first step in achieving a greater degree of social reintegration. For example, during the Reentry Court sessions that I observed, employment was almost always the first topic discussed during the check-ins with court participants. It also appeared that securing stable employment was often used as a metric for success within the intensive supervision program and factored heavily into whether participants were placed onto a less-intensive probation level. Stable employment is often the precursor to being able to secure the financial means for paying off fines or restitution as part of participants' probation requirements, obtaining more desirable housing (moving out of family members' homes, leaving a half-way house), purchasing a car and insurance, providing for children, and generally feeling like a "contributing" member of society. Employment served as a stepping stone or gateway to opportunities to develop other types of social bonds, particularly forming attachments with children as a primary provider and caregiver, greater involvement with participants' communities as a result of less restrictive supervision, leading to stronger ties to conventional society.

Attachments to family and social supports

Approximately half of my participants were parents of minor children and many voiced a desire to reconnect with their children and become active parents in their child's life. In fact, several parents stated that their children were their primary motivation for staying crime-free once released from prison, or were the reason that they committed themselves to successfully completing their in-prison programming so that they could become better parents for their children.

… my son is older and I'm not saying that I was never a mother to him, but I didn't feel like a mom. I just didn't have that feeling of like… me and my son are so close [now] and I don't know, I guess having the two kids, I have a boy and a girl and it's my baby girl and I was like man, this is really real for me and getting home to them and the support of my family which, my family was wavy (participant's word choice) every time I've been incarcerated, but they were strong for me here this time. (Marie)

*****

A lot of people that I know then, they go back and forth, back and forth and I'm like look, the day that I came home and I held my children for the first time, I knew that it was no, I didn't have another chance, I didn't have another chance to be able to step out of their life and come back, I'll never do that to them again, so anything that could take me away from them, anything that could slow me down from being around them at all, I want no dealings with it. (Eli)

Both Marie and Eli describe the drive they have to reconnect with their children and to be a stable parent in their children's lives. Marie shared with me how she had been in and out of the criminal justice system through most of her late teens and early 20's. While she had children during this time, she never really took on the role of "mother" because of her focus on feeding her heroin addiction. She stated that during her most recent incarceration, something had changed in her and she wanted to be a mother to her children, she wanted to be a role model for them and not a disappointment. Eli described the hurt he realized he inflicted on his children by coming in and out of their lives as he cycled through the criminal justice system and his commitment to stay in his children's lives from this point forward.

Beyond the motivation and desire to from stronger attachments with their children, some participants completed voluntary parenting classes while still incarcerated and have made conscious efforts to become more involved in their children's lives following release.

…sometimes I do get excited just being able to play with my kids, like my daughter, she's crawlin', she's sleeps a lot, she eats and sleeps, but being able to be with my son, like, Saturdays we're going jogging and I would make him take the basketball with him because he likes to play football and basketball and his dad's not really a part of his life so I have to step up and…I grew up kind of being a tom boy so I'm okay with, you know, putting on a pair of sneakers and running the road with him. (Marie)

Marie also talked about working on her GED so that her children can look up to her for furthering her education as not see it as an excuse for dropping out of school themselves. She discusses how she bonds with her son by working on their homework together and how it makes her feel happy knowing her son is proud of her for getting her GED. This aligns with with prior scholarship on the importance of gaining approval of positive social support persons or receiving recognition for posive, or prosocial behavior (Maruna, 2001; Leverentz, 2014). When Hirschi describes the social bond of attachment, he describes how this bond reflects a desire to seek approval from family members and to share the same conventional values. The fact that Marie is engaging in extracurricular activities and schoolwork with her son and seeks his approval demonstrates the importance of this attachment for her. Eli shares a similar desire:

I felt like real cool the other day like, a couple weekends ago, my son, he had a couple of his friends over at his house and they were all hangin' out…we went to the park, and we walked on the trails, let them play with stuff, he's like, "yeah dad, before we get home, you think we could get some movies"? I'm like "yeah". They were like, "aw man you got like the coolest dad".

In addition to the desire to develop positive attachments to their children, people often expressed wanting to repair damaged relationships with parents and other family members and seek approval, or "prove" to these relatives that they were

leading a crime-free, productive life. They also sought acceptance and approval from coworkers, probation officers, and other members of society. Sally shared how she valued the support she received from her probation officer and that it was his encouragement that really helped her get her life on track.

> It took my probation officer to tell me he believed in me for me to be like get my butt in gear…I took in a lot of what he was telling me and I like, and I would analyze it you know and he was just like why don't you try this. And I'm like alright well I'll try this like he would just, he was like, why don't you try Crossfit…because I started running because he told me to get a hobby.

She continued to share how she and her probation officer will often talk and joke about running, being involved in Crossfit, and participating in local 5k events. Sally enjoyed this connection she had with her probation officer and that they had common hobbies and would see each other at local races. It was important for Sally to maintain this attachment because it was a motivator for her to keep challenging herself. She added that once her probation term is complete, that she would like to maintain contact with her probation officer because he is such a source of support and encouragement in her life.

In fact, the majority of participants felt that their probation officer was a source of support who they could go to if they had a problem or needed encouragement. This sentiment often differed from the expectations many participants had while they were still incarcerated regarding their relationships with their future probation officer. Participants frequently stated that they were anticipating a tense, unsupportive relationship with their probation officer and feared that their officer would "throw the book at them" and throw them back in prison if they made any mistake. Individuals told me that these expectations came from negative stories that circulated throughout the prison and work release centers and that despite bracing themselves for a conflict-

filled relationship, they were surprised to find that their probation officers were often supportive, helpful, and gave them second chances when mistakes were made. Many people stated that they were thankful for the support, particularly those who lacked additional social support from family and friends. Almost every person shared that they had cut ties with most of their friends and former acquaintances, and as a result, had very few individuals in their lives to seek support and encouragement from. Therefore, the probation officer was one of the first positive relationships that some participants formed upon their release and therefore one of the initial valued attachments to conventional society that was developed. A more detailed discussion of relationships between individuals and their probation officers, within the context of stigma and legal consciousness, will be provided in chapter 5. However, it should be noted that I searched the existing literature for other research that documents returning citizens or probationers' perceptions about their supervision officer as a source of positive support and could not find other scholarly work that directly discusses this particular type of relationship, particularly from the view of the returning citizen.

<p style="text-align:center">Involvement in the community</p>

In addition to gainful employment and positive social support networks, there was also a desire from individuals to become more involved in their local communities through participation in extracurricular activities, attending religious services and events, and engaging in work that "gave back" to their community. Table 4.2 lists the types of activities that individuals either currently participated in or desired to participate in once they felt more stable in their reentry process.

Table 4.2. Types of community involvement activities reported by returning citizens.

Community Involvement	N
Religious Group	8
Sports or Athletic Activities	4
Volunteering	4
None currently, but wants to be involved	4
None currently, no desire to be involved	5

Note: Only 27 of 45 individuals discussed community involvement in regards to participation in activities, a desire for involvement, or a desire to remain uninvolved.

Several people shared that they were members of extramural sports leagues or participated in athletic activities, such as flag football, 5k races, and going to the gym. Not only did these activities serve as a healthy outlet for relieving stress and frustration, but they provided opportunities for people to expand their social networks to include individuals that share similar hobbies and values. The same can be said for those who shared that they were actively involved in faith-based activities or attending religious services. The above table does not include people who regularly participate in support group meetings such as AA/NA because for some, attendance at these groups is an expectation of their supervision versus a strictly voluntary activity. However, almost all of the men and women who attended support groups, regardless of whether they were mandated, described these groups as supportive and a place to feel accepted and build positive relationships. The majority of those who engaged in community activities, including support groups, found that they were able to find strength and acceptance from other members, as well as use those connections to access other opportunities related to employment, housing, and other resources.

> Like I said the AA, the groups, the women that I've got around me in the program are just amazing. These meetings that I go to, there's doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses. There's all walks of life and I'm proud to be part of that program. I'm proud to be sitting in those rooms. (Hattie)

Like when you are in the slums and you hit rock bottom your network is only so big, so when you're out and you expect to do better for yourself, putting yourself around better people and better things come with that you know, you meet people who own businesses and can employ you, you meet people who you know can, like I started running so I met people that were [better people]. The better people that are around you, like the better they feel about themselves, the better you feel about yourself. (Sally)

Sally's experience with surrounding herself with people that she calls "better" than her previous social connections demonstrates a recognition that participation in these community activities could help build positive social support networks and additional attachments to conventional society. This relates to Hirschi's (1969) assertion that the four bond types that he identified are often inter-related, for example, increased community involvement is related to the development of additional attachments to prosocial peers or increased "buy-in" to conventional values and beliefs that are shared by these new social connections. Like Sally, Eli spoke directly to this point when describing his motivation to be involved in community activities:

…like I was told by a professor always surround yourself with people doin' better than you are. Because if you open and willin' to learn, then maybe you pick up somethin'…I participate in flag football, so like, I talk to people different companies and I just, I surround myself with people that are progressin' at different levels and in different ways and just so-I surround myself with people who know what they're doin'.

Other people described the benefits of their community involvement in regards to gaining leads on job prospects or finding housing through members of their congregations or mosques.

There was a guy that's in recovery and goes to the AA/NA groups that I go to. He's like the foreman that runs all the jobs and he was like, "Man, if you want, I'll get you a job where I'm at" and I went and talked to the guy and they hired me. I started working pretty much instantly. (Randolph)

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> We're the new monster. We're the ones that they come for with the pitchforks and torches. Believe it or not, it's almost what I was feeling. When I walked out free that night and I was picked up by the bishop of the church I have been and I thought, where am I going to live. He had it all set up. That's just how the church I attend works. (Ernie)

These examples make it clear that involvement in community activities not only can increase an individual's bond with their community and conventional society, but has the potential to provide opportunities to form additional bonds as well.

Finally, there were several people that expressed a desire to "give back" to their communities by either becoming involved in charity work or becoming a role model for youth who may be want to adopt a lifestyle of crime or for individuals who are coming out of prison. This seems to indicate a clear desire for these people to not only establish a bond with conventional society through community involvement, but to improve their community (and society) by helping those who may need additional resources and support.

> …everybody in my church, they've been really good to me and of course being homeless myself, I still do the work with my church to go ahead and still try and supply stuff for homeless people. (David)

Others talked about working at animal shelters, thrift stores, developing afterschool programs for kids, becoming a speaker or counselor to help those with substance abuse, and being a resource for individuals coming out of prison. Most of these "giving back" goals were aimed at helping those who were in a similar situation as the participants or an attempt to prevent children and adults from making the same mistakes in their lives. This desire is consistent with other research looking at helping relationships among criminalized populations (Kenemore & Rolden, 2006; Shdaimah & Leon, n.d.) Shdaimah and Leon found that women engaged in prostitution would

often provide advice, encouragement, or support to other women who were also engaged in sex work. This was a way for women to build community, but also try to help one another avoid negative or even dangerous consequences of their chosen occupation. Again, these goals expressed by individuals to improve the lives of others living in their community suggest that these they wish to become involved in conventional society and work towards helping those around them lead a law-abiding life as well.

Belief in a higher power and the motivation to stay crime-free

The stories that returning citizens shared related to each of Hirschi's four types of social bonds. His final bond emphasizes belief in conventional rules and values. In prior research on social bonds, religiosity has been used as an indicator of belief, with stronger religious affiliations associated with a greater bond to conventional society and its moral and behavioral values and expectations for citizens (Baier and Wright, 2001; Johnson et al, 2000; Cretacci, 2003; Evans et al., 1996). The assumption is that most religious faiths have a value system that is similar to that of larger society, particularly in regards to inflicting harm on other individuals or engaging in deviant or criminal behavior. Slightly over half of individuals discussed the role of religion in their lives and in relation to their reentry experience during the interview. It was not uncommon for them to describe their religious faith as a source of emotional support when they were feeling discouraged or hopeless, a motivator when they were faced with setbacks or temptation to relapse into hold habits or behaviors, and as a way to become more involved in their community (again, demonstrating that these social bonds are often inter-related). While only three participants were explicit in stating that they used their religion as their code or moral compass to live by in their new

crime-free lifestyles, they support prior research that suggests religion is often an indicator of belief in conventional society's values and expectations. Lucky embodied this sentiment perfectly when he stated:

> When I started doing what I was supposed to do religiously, everything else [fell] into place because everything is supposed to be religiously good… You're not supposed to do drugs. You're not supposed to cuss. You're not supposed to do all sorts of stuff. When you follow your religion, whether it is true or not, you got to believe that.

Lucky made it clear that he was using his faith as a guide for how to live a lifestyle free of criminal behavior. His faith aided him in "buying into" the values of conventional society.

As we can see from the experiences of the participants described above, social bonds play an important, direct role in the reentry process. Participants who felt that they were having success in their reentry often attributed this to their ability to find a job, have supportive family and friends, and being viewed as welcome members in their community, whether that was through participation in faith-based, recreational activities, or support groups. During the course of conducting these interviews, it became evident that individuals who were experiencing slower progress than they had hoped for, which only six participants explicitly expressed they were making less progress than they expected, lacked these critical bonds with society. While there are no clear indicators of success or failure in this project due to the process-focused approach to reentry, the six individuals who expressed frustration or discouragement were more likely to report that they were unemployed (2 had part-time employment and the remaining 4 were unemployed), lacked a social support system that they could rely on (typically only reporting a single source for support and only 2 were residing with family members, the other 4 were homeless or living in temporary housing), they

were socially withdrawn from their communities (no participation in community activities or support groups), and did not discuss religion or or other belief system as a motivating or guiding force in their lives (only 1 of the 6 mentioned religion).

> To me, I thought that it was going to be easy just coming out of jail, getting back to my life, but it pretty much isn't. It's the total opposite, pretty much got to start from square one unless you have the support that you need to help you, like keep your head focused, feet straight on the ground. (JB)

JB is one of the individuals who felt his progress following release from prison was slower than he expected, and his statement illustrates the importance of social bonds in the reentry process. Without attachments to prosocial, supportive people and commitment to conventional activities, the reentry process is likely to be a greater challenge, lacking the support and encouragement many individuals need to have a positive reentry experience.

Experiences of Stigma

The relationship between stigma and the opportunity to develop particular social bonds to conventional society will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but for this section, I would like to share participants' experiences of stigma and resulting discriminatory behavior as a result of their label as a criminal or ex-felon. Participants' stories indicated that they experienced each of the three conceptualizations of stigma put forth by LeBel (2012) and Luoma et al. (2007): perceived stigma, self-stigma, and enacted stigma. In addition, stigma came from both individual-level and institutional sources, resulting in personal stigmatizing experiences as well as structural discrimination.

Sources of Stigma

A felony conviction results in the formal application of a stigmatizing label to individuals that results in formal and informal forms of social exclusion and discriminatory behavior (Pager, 2003; Lemert, 1951; Link & Phelan, 2001). Those with felony convictions experience institutional stigmatization through legal restrictions and policies and are often denied the right to vote, prohibited from owning a firearm, serve on juries, receive licensure or certification within particular career fields, are ineligible for some forms of social services and aid, prohibited from being hired in a variety of employment settings, denied public housing (depending on the offense), and can be legally banned from certain areas of the community (Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Leon & Kilmer, 2013). In addition, the felon label carries with it a negative connotation that often results in the perception that individuals who have this label being untrustworthy, immoral, or lack an ability to change their behavior, resulting in stigmatizing experiences during person-to-person social interactions.

The returning citizens that I interviewed reported both perceived and experienced stigma from numerous sources. Table 4.3 provides a summary of the types of stigma reported by individuals.

Table 4.3 Sources and types of stigmatization.

Sources and Types of Stigmatization	N
Employers	
Experienced Directly	17
Perceives Stigmatization	2
General Public	
Experienced Directly	14
Perceives Stigmatization	20
Police	

Experienced Directly	4
Perceives Stigmatization	10
Other CJ Actors (PO, judges, etc)	
Experienced Directly	0
Perceives Stigmatization	7
Family (Experienced)	8
Peers	
Due to Criminal Background	1
Due to conventional Lifestyle	3
Service Providers (Experienced)	3
Self-Stigmatizing	9

Unsurprisingly, almost half of the individuals in this study reported experiencing stigma from potential employers. While some occupations may have policies that exclude individuals with felony backgrounds or who have been convicted of certain offenses, the people I interviewed reported that there are many employers who choose not to hire someone with a felony background due to the perceived "risk" this individual brings to their place of employment. Almost a quarter of individuals described the frustrating process of submitting countless applications for employment, often never receiving a call back for an interview. There were also those who secured interviews and made a positive impression with the employer, but then once background checks were run, told they could not be hired, or they simply never heard from the employer again.

> Sally: I applied to [a gas station] and um, she called me in for an interview, and everything was cool, and she's like, well, how do you feel about management, and it was awesome, but she um, and I called her back and said well, how is everything, and she was just like I can't hire you because of your background. And that was it, that was it.
>
> Interviewer: Even though you obviously made a very strong first impression.

> Sally: I sold myself without a doubt, but because of my background, it hindered me from getting that job. But I'm working on it too, seven years, and then I can get expungement.

Sally is confident that she made a favorable impression with the employer during her face-to-face interview, but her criminal background kept her from getting hired. Andrew was fortunately still hired by an employer after disclosing his criminal background during the interview.

> Like, for instance. I met the owner of a company that I work for now. When he first met me, he was positive, upbeat, you know, I don't talk or sound like someone who's been to prison, but as soon [as he] asked [about criminal conviction], and I mean, I could see him writing, that he was going to put "no", but then I answered his question because he was answering his own question, "you know, actually I have been to prison". "Oh, you've been to prison?" and he drops the pen, and he's just like "so what happened"? now see, before I said I been to prison he was all upbeat, he thought I was a college kid, just came from Del State or something…so I mean, it's definitely a hoop to jump through. I'm not proud of my past, but I can't change it so no point in being ashamed of it.

Andrew shared that he received a job offer despite the employer changing his attitude somewhat during the interview. Since he didn't "sound like a prisoner," he was able to successfully dispel some of the negative stereotypes associated with having a criminal background. As mentioned in the previous section, people often used their social connections to obtain employment referrals and actual job placements. In these situations, there was less likelihood of experiencing stigma from employers because they either already knew the person prior to their incarceration or the employer was already comfortable with hiring individuals with criminal backgrounds and did not take issue with bringing on another individual that had a felony record. There were also a couple of individuals who planned to get around the issue of employer stigma by seeking out the resources to start their own business.

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> I know who I am. I know what I did in the past. I see this not as a stepping stone but as a hurdle, but it just seems like the hurdles they're going to get higher and higher and what do I need to get over this hurdle because I can't jump it anymore, can I use a ladder?...So I know the hurdles are common and they are going to get higher and higher and higher. In order for me to get over these hurdles, I have to have my own business so I don't have these problems "but I can't hire because so and so"…I don't have to worry about that. (John)

John perceives employer stigma as an ongoing obstacle that he will continue to experience and concludes that the only way that he will be able to get past this particular barrier is to go into business for himself. He explains that it's not because he's unwilling to do less-desirable or low pay work, but that he doesn't feel that he will be able to gain much traction because of the stigma he has encountered from employers. It is important to note that only 19 of the 43 people that I interviewed reported that they perceived or experienced stigma from employers and that there were people who did not experience stigma during their job search.

> Actually, people who know I've been incarcerated and people who haven't known and I told them that I have been working with just like supervisors that I work with, they ask me, I don't like to lie no more. I prefer to just speak the truth and I don't know, where I come and where I am right now, and they-I think they will respect me more that way because I'm keeping it straight with them. They've been nothing but supportive, so far. (Alvin)

Alvin, and others who shared similar stories, believed that by being open and honest about his criminal history he can address and alleviate any potential concerns that his employer or supervisors may have regarding his background. Engaging in open and truthful communication with employers and co-workers about an individual's background, particularly if they are a productive employee, may help challenge and dispel stereotypes that employers hold regarding the "risk" of hiring or working with someone with a criminal history.

While stigma from employers was the most commonly reported source of stigma, people also shared experiences of stigma from the general public, social services staff, police officers, and from former peers and associates. Many individuals discussed interactions with strangers while waiting for the bus or chatting with acquaintances and how the dynamic of that interaction would change once they found out the person had a criminal background.

> You can be talking to some people in certain environments and it's not until the conversation comes up that you've been arrested that you can pretty much sometime see the change in people's face after you tell them. (Andrew)
>
> *****
> I know myself personally, I've done a lot of time. I don't really like telling people that, and for certain reasons I don't have to, but, well I mean yeah…generally I dress well, I speak well, and people don't really notice it. But if you tell them, they'll start attributing things to, "Chimmy must be like that because he's done time". But if I don't say that, you'll never know. (Chimmy)
>
> *****
> People find out that you were in jail don't want to hang out with you or talk to you. They pretty much act like it's a disease. (JB)
>
> *****
> It's the whole stigma of, you did time no matter how much or how little, if you were locked up at any point, you're automatically a criminal in lot of people's eyes. It's always that attitude because you can always tell whether or not a person is going to be relaxed around you, when you start talking to them. As soon as they hear and no matter how much a person tries to hide it, and I see it so much, they just start getting a little rigid. (David)

Andrew, Chimmy, JB, and David all share similar stories about how they have felt stigma from interactions with individuals who did not initially know that they had a criminal past. They each felt that once this part of their lives became known, the individuals that they were conversing with starting to distance themselves, developed

changes in their body language or demeanor, or began treating the person differently due to the attributes they were assigning to that criminal label. The experiences described by these four men also align with LeBel (2012) and Luoma et al. (2007)'s three conceptualizations of stigma. Perceived stigma refers to the way in which an individual believes society thinks and feels about a particular stigmatized group, as we see illustrated in JB's example. Referring back to table 4.3, it is evident that people perceive the general public and criminal justice actors as a source of potential stigma. Almost half of the people I interviewed shared stories of perceived stigma, stating that they felt society viewed any person with a criminal background as dangerous or untrustworthy or unable to change their past behavior. Chimmy and David's statements are good examples of self-stigma, or the way in which an individual believes society views them personally as being a member of a stigmatized group. Finally, both Andrew and David, along with many other participants, shared their experiences with enacted stigma, or actual instances of stigmatization and discrimination as a result of membership in a stigmatized group.

Along with the assumptions that a person with a criminal history possesses negative or unsavory personality traits or behaviors, returning citizens also shared stories that indicated that individuals with whom they interacted held stereotypical views about people who have been to prison. Marie describes an interesting interaction with a customer who held negative assumptions about individuals with criminal backgrounds, but did not know that Marie had a background herself.

> Because I was on home confinement and no one knew because, you know I was trying to hide this box by wearing pants, I would talk to people and they'd be like "yeah those girls from work release, they're just no good", and in my mind, I'm thinking like, when I started here I was in work release, and right now I'm still on level four. You think you have this look of people, but here I

am you're talking to me about people. I'm one of them people and you don't even know that, so you're judging somebody and you can't even tell.

Marie 's story illustrates how these negative stereotypes about those with criminal backgrounds are assumed to be common, shared beliefs, demonstrated by the customer feeling comfortable enough to make this remark to their server, who happened to have a criminal background. The story also illustrates how in addition to negative assumptions regarding the behavior or attitudes of someone who has a criminal past, there is also an assumption about what a criminal should look like, dress like, or speak like. Andrew and Chimmy alluded to this as well in their stories, stating that the employer or others who they interact with assume that they do not have criminal backgrounds because of the way they dress and speak. Dominic speaks to this directly when discussing what he thinks could be done to combat the stigma that individuals with criminal backgrounds face in their daily lives:

> We need to change the public's perception. They're not bad guys, they're not all liars. Some of them are just regular people caught up in this web. We can't change anything until we change the public's perception of who they are. (Dominic)

Other individuals provided explanations of why they felt the public held such negative views towards individuals who have criminal backgrounds, and specifically those who have been incarcerated. Terry, along with several others, felt that the public's perceptions about criminals were shaped by media attention to high-profile cases as well as sensationalized television shows:

> If you go through the channels you see a couple shows about prisons and stuff like that, that's not the normal. That's not my experience. My experience isn't those "worst prisons in America". That's not my experience. People get that in their mind because that's what they see. They expect people who have been in that situation, they maybe act or conduct themselves like those people.

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In my own experience working within a variety of prison settings over the last several years, I can relate to Terry and other's frustration regarding how prison is depicted in the mainstream media. Although my exposure to high-security settings may have been limited, I would say that almost all of my visits to correctional institutions have been calm, orderly, and filled with respectful interactions between myself and those incarcerated there. These experiences are in stark contrast to television shows that document frequent physical altercations between inmates and correctional officers, prison fights, and violent or other behaviors that require disciplinary action. Discussions with correctional officers at these institutions typically reaffirm that my experiences are typical, and that while significant incidents and conflicts do happen, they are not an everyday occurrence. However, it is much less interesting to depict education classes, group counselling sessions, or incarcerated individuals who are having respectful, positive conversations and interactions with the correctional officers and staff. As a result, members of the general public that do not have a personal connection to someone who has been incarcerated may have a highly distorted view of how a prison, and those locked within it, functions. The consequence of these misconceptions is that individuals who have been released from prison experience suspicion, hostility, or social distancing from members of the general public once their criminal background or incarceration history is revealed.

"The shame is there": Stigma and personal identity

> The shame is there. And it hurts about every day. I just try to move forward and I can't allow people to drive my bus. (John)

After discussing the ways in which people may have experienced or perceived stigma as a result of their criminal label, I would ask them if they viewed themselves any differently because they had a criminal history or because they had been incarcerated. Approximately 20% of the people I spoke with admitted that they sometimes let the stigma they experienced from others or the negativity attached to an offender label influence how they saw themselves.

> I never been in trouble before so I never had that. People do bad things and make mistakes and do things, but it was never something that made me feel ashamed like, "oh God. I let my behavior cost me everything", you what I mean? It's about, all about forgiving, I have a problem with that and I fight it every day because it's very hard to forgive myself for what I've done. (Kisha)
>
> *****
>
> I had these moments of shame creeping in or gosh, I wonder if they heard something or yeah, I have these moments. (Hattie)

Kisha and Hattie both admitted to struggling with their self-esteem following their incarceration and found it difficult to stop letting their past mistakes define who they were. Additionally, this diminished self-confidence resulted in individuals experiencing anxiety and uncertainty when navigating various social activities, fearing that they would somehow "reveal themselves" or that those around them could tell that they had a criminal past. These feelings of being "outed" as someone with a criminal background resulted in some individuals curtailing their social activities and interactions, potentially resulting in less involvement with their community, something that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In contrast, there were people who refused to let their offender label or criminal past be defining aspects of who they were striving to be following their release from prison.

> As soon as you begin to identify yourself as somethin', you begin to develop those characteristics. So, first and foremost, I'm a father, and I'm a man, anything else, anybody else has a say about the way they feel, maybe I'll address, 9 times out of 10 I won't. But until then, I'll handle what I need to handle. (Eli)

> *****
> I'm showing myself that I can be better than that. Showing myself that I'm not that person. I'm not that person. (Lucky)

This type of stigma resistance is consistent with other research on members of criminalized or marginalized populations who try to distance themselves from their "spoiled identity" (Shdaimah & Leon, n.d.; Goffman, 1963; Opsal, 2011). In fact, about a third of individuals viewed themselves as a positively transformed person, often describing themselves as stronger, more mature, more responsible, more honest, a better parent, or better able to handle conflict or setbacks that they may encounter.

> My attitude, just the person I am today, a lot more mature. I think I had a lot of time to think and grow. (Steve C.)

> *****
> I matured a lot. I learned how to take care of my responsibilities, become responsible. (Sincere)
> *****
> I'm matured. I learned a lot. I'm glad that I had all these programs and this help that I got in prison. I hate to say it. I guess I was made to go to prison and to get my life together. Even though it was a long time, but maybe I was just meant to be to fuck up and get to where I am right now. (Alvin)

These individuals made a conscious effort to focus on the ways in which they had grown or improved as a person while they were incarcerated, often attributing this growth to treatment programming or involvement in therapeutic community settings. This finding is also consistent with other research that has examined identity transformation in incarcerated youth (Abrams & Hyun, 2009) and research on the impacts of correctional programming and self-reflection on incarcerated individuals'

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optimism regarding their release (Visher & O'Connell, 2012; Benson, Alarid, Burton, & Cullen, 2011). These individuals were choosing to focus on the opportunities for self-transformation and growth that they experienced while incarcerated rather than the negative attributions tied to their offender label. This achievement and strengths-focused approach was carried into release as individuals would proudly share their educational or occupational achievements, their success at living a drug-free or crime-free lifestyle, or particularly positive moments spent with their children or family. Maruna (2001) discusses this declaration of positive achievements as a way of redeeming one's self through a redemption narrative, which can empower individuals and help them connect to their "true self" (95) versus being defined by the choices from their deviant pasts.

Unanticipated findings in regards to stigma

Unanticipated findings related to experiences and perceptions of stigma are important to note as there is a lack of information about these types of stigmatizing experiences in the existing literature. Although it may be an artifact of having conducted the majority of interviews in probation offices, participants overwhelmingly stated that they did not experience stigma from their probation officer (PO). Several people even admitted to approaching their first check-in with their PO from a defensive stance, anticipating that the officer would treat them poorly or look down on them.

> Like a lot of the POs know me, like man, I really hope it's not a PO that knows me because my reputation is just not all that great and they're just going to judge me from the beginning…but it's been different. Like everything is just so different like um, I call [my PO] and I'm like, "are you busy, can I talk to you for a minute?" (Marie)

Marie was worried that her prior involvement with probation would result in her current PO treating her negatively because of what he may have heard from her former POs or what was in her file. However, she expressed that she has a very positive relationship with her officer and that she views him as a source of support and encouragement. Two participants who had police contact since their release from prison shared a similar expectation that they would be treated unfairly or poorly by police as a result of their criminal background, and were surprised to be treated respectfully and have their concerns taken seriously. These stories indicate that participants were assuming stigmatization from actors within the criminal justice system. There is some support in the literature that lends credibility to the perceptions of returning citizens regarding the type of relationship they anticipated with tier PO. Studies on probation training and job expectations found that paradigm shifts in community correction practices from "supportive to surveilling relationships seems indicative of how far the service has moved away from a paradigm that takes account of the 'client's perspective' (Burnett & McNeill, 2005: 223-224; Annison, Eadie, & Knight, 2008). However, research findings that indicate that more control-oriented rhetoric may not actually translate into meaningful changes in correctional practices (Phelps, 2011; 2014). Despite whether there have been actual changes in supervision policies or practices, returning citizens are anticipating a punitive-oriented PO that views them as criminals to be monitored rather than people to support, thus leading to the perception of POs and police as sources of stigma reported by individuals. The next chapter will return to the implications of this anticipation of stigma as a result of the way in which people perceived or previously interacted with the criminal justice system.

In addition to not experiencing expected stigma from criminal justice actors, ten returning citizens reported experiencing unanticipated stigma from former deviant peers and acquaintances. This stigmatizing worked in the other direction: chastising them for failing to return to a life of crime and adopting a conventional lifestyle. Returning citizens reported that these former peers have mocked them for being friendly with police and probation officers, have refused to speak to them, and have even spread false stories of criminal wrongdoing to try and get people in trouble with their probation officer. Individuals who experienced this form of stigma often indicated that they were not expecting their former friends and peers to be so unsupportive and were unsure how to account for the hostility. Some stated that they felt these former friends were jealous of their new-found success (having a job, making new friends, etc.), or were so embedded in the criminal lifestyle that they felt "betrayed" by the those who no longer wanted to be a part of that culture.

> …my church was doing this thing that was benefitting the cops…and I posted it on Facebook and a couple people saw it, and they're just like, oh look at Sally suckin' up to police… One week, and I was doing good, and [my PO] was like "I heard that you're using heroin", and I'm like (shocked look) "what? Pssh." And he was like, "do you mind giving a urine?" I said "I don't mind…I'm not sure who you heard that from, but you might wanna check the source"… and you know, that was just a friendly message. [A former friend] apparently got violated with a dirty urine, and so she said I was using. (Sally)

Sally, along with other participants who experienced similar hostility from former friends and peers, ultimately chose to cut their ties with these individuals, stating it was not worth potentially jeopardizing their recovery or their probation success. I was unable to find existing literature that examined the stigmatization of non-criminal individuals by those engaged in deviant lifestyles, and therefore this is an area that needs continued exploration. However, there is tangentially related literature on

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college drinking and abstaining behavior that offers parallel findings. In these studies, researchers examine the experience of stigma and resulting stigma management practices of college students who choose to abstain from drinking, a normative behavior on most college campuses. While abstaining from alcohol would not be considered deviant in most social contexts, abstainers on college campuses are viewed as deviant and report experiencing negativity from their drinking peers (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2005; Romo, 2012). Returning citizens could be viewed as deviant among their former peers, whose criminal behavior is viewed as normative.

It is important to appreciate the unique challenge that men and women recently released from prison face in regards to stigmatization. Not only do they face stigmatization from members of conventional society due to their criminal past, but they face stigmatization from members of their former criminal pasts who do not approve of returning citizens' newly adopted conventional life-style. People who experienced this latter form of stigmatization stated that nothing had prepared them for handling these negative responses from former peers and that reentry programming that did discuss the potential stigma they could encounter when released never addressed stigma as a result of choosing to be a law-abiding community member.

"The Government Doesn't Care": Legal Consciousness of Returning Citizens

> The government doesn't care. They just want to make money. That police slogan "to protect and serve", they don't specify what they protect and serve for a reason. It's not the people, it's not the civilian, it's the revenue. (Kaanachi)

The third theoretical concept that is examined in this project is also the least observable or directly communicated through social interactions. Legal consciousness

refers to the way in which individuals think about, interact with, and experience the law in their lives (Ewick & Silbey, 2001; 2003; Silbey, 2005; Cowan, 2004). It is a dynamic, fluctuating concept without clear, discreet categories or classifications. As mentioned in chapter 2, legal consciousness may manifest itself in a variety of ways, including how individuals discuss their "rights" in society, resolve disputes, perceive the accessibility and fairness of using the law to meet their needs, perceive "justice", and hold attitudes regarding various actors within the legal arena (Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Silbey, 2005; Abrego, 2011; Nielson, 2000; Sarat, 1990). In the case of the returning citizens interviewed in this study, legal consciousness primary manifested itself in the ways the criminal justice system controls and restricts one's behavior as well as shapes one's identity due the formally applied, and often publically known, legal status (Sarat, 1990). Due to these individuals' experiences, both before their incarceration and in the weeks immediately following their release, these men and women understand the "law" to specifically mean the criminal justice system or criminal law (Mobley, 2004). This is understandable considering that for over two-thirds of the people I interviewed, their lives have been embedded in the criminal justice system for a significant portion of their lives.

> I lived in crime for ever since I can remember. First time I ever got arrested, I was seven years old. (E-man)

Like E-man, many of the people I spoke with discussed growing up "in the streets" where they were either engaging in criminal behavior or surrounded by those engaged in crime. In these contexts, police were viewed as enemies, or people to fear, distrust, and ultimately avoid. For some, police were simply part of the "game" of living a life on the streets.

I'll put it like this, before I went to jail I lived a life that actually involved [police] being in my life, and I've changed to a point where they're not in my life. I don't live a life that involves them, so I don't worry about them. But before, I mean, those were consequences of what I was doing, so they were in my life. (Andrew)

Because their past and present lives involve the criminal justice system (i.e. interacting with or avoiding police, themselves or their family and friends incarcerated or involved in the CJ system, or working with the system in regards to their probation), the men and women I interviewed always spoke about the criminal justice system when I asked them to share their thoughts with me about the "law" or what role the "law" played in their lives.[13] Even when people spoke more broadly about power, politics, and corruption of "the law" it still always was directly linked to the criminal justice system versus a broader conceptualization of how the law operates in their lives. Therefore, based on the stories shared by those I interviewed, the concept of legal consciousness specifically referred to how individuals think about, experience, and interact with the criminal justice system. This narrower conceptualization is not inconsistent with what other scholars have found regarding the legal consciousness of criminal or marginalized populations. Scholars who have used the concept of legal cynicism in their work have stated that the legal consciousness of individuals is informed by the direct interactions with the law as well as the broader social context

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[13] It should be noted that while I believe the lifestyles and backgrounds of these individuals ultimately shape how they experience the law in their lives, which translated into what they chose to discuss in the interview, the context of the interview (probation offices) and the questions on reentry that preceded the questions about law, could have influenced how individuals chose to respond. Additionally, my decision-making on how to follow-up to responses or probe for additional information could have limited the scope of how law was discussed by participants.

the person is situated within. For individuals living in structurally disadvantaged and high-crime communities, their legal consciousness is largely shaped by interactions with law-enforcement. When those interactions are routinely negative, residents of these communities develop a legal cynicism, or a view of the law as illegitimate and unable to address concerns of public safety, often resulting in a greater tolerance for deviant behavior within the community (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998; Kirk & Papachristos, 2011).

In regards to legal consciousness among specific, marginalized groups, research also suggests that these individuals' legal consciousness is primarily constructed from the particular legal actors and contexts they find themselves interacting with (Sexton. 2015; Sarat, 1990). Sarat (1990) found that welfare recipients' lives were entangled in a web of legal rules and constraints related to their receipt of welfare assistance. "The legal consciousness of the welfare poor is…substantially different from other groups in society for whom law is a less immediate and visible presence. Law is, for people on welfare, repeatedly encountered in the most ordinary transactions and events of their lives" (344). The same can be said of returning citizens who are caught within a web of post-release supervision requirements and legally-sanctioned restrictions on their rights and social participation. Their experience with the "law" is almost exclusively experiences related to their involvement with the criminal justice system. Sexton (2015) coined the term "penal consciousness" to describe a more specific variant of legal consciousness of incarcerated men and women, who, due to their incarceration, experience the law almost exclusively through it's "penality, rather than legality" (118). Again, this more narrowly defined form of legal consciousness aligns with how returning citizens

perceive and interact with the law, which is primarily through their experience within the criminal justice system and post-release supervision in particular. Based on these prior conceptualizations, I believe it is appropriate to use the term "legal consciousness" within the context of this research to refer to the ways in which returning citizens think about and experience the criminal justice system in their lives.[14] Within this narrower conceptualization of legal consciousness, people shared a variety of experiences. This included their perceptions and attitudes towards the law in general, as well as particular criminal justice actors (i.e. police, probation officers), the ways in which the law controlled their lives and impacted their ability to form social bonds upon their release from prison, and the way that their legal status influenced the types of stigma they experienced in their lives. This section will primarily focus on the ways individuals perceive and think about the law in their lives, while the next chapter will discuss the relationships between legal consciousness, social bonds, and stigma.

Perceptions of Police

Returning citizens often had complex viewpoints regarding the various actors within the criminal justice system, with negative attitudes towards particular actors or groups and more favorable attitudes towards others. Several individuals viewed criminal justice actors who they felt were "doing their job" in a positive and respectful light. These actors included correctional officers, probation officers and police, who people felt were only performing their expected roles when they had to discipline

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[14] Relatedly, when I use the term "law" to describe findings related to the experiences shared with me by the people I interviewed, I am almost exclusively referring to criminal justice policies and practices or criminal law.

someone or make an arrest and did not hold any particular ill-will towards these individuals.

> I'll put it like this, if I came in here-I know I got this box on my leg, right? When I come in here and I've been drinking or something like that or I did something and my PO locks me up, he was doing his job. Now, if I come in here, I've been doing what he wants me to do and he harass me and try to lock me up, then there's something different. (Fred)

<div align="center">*****</div>

> I have a certain respect for police also as long as they're doing their job. I understand that they're responsible. They help people and they keep people safe and I will say there's more good than bad. (Terri)

<div align="center">*****</div>

> I support the police, I support probation, I mean, they wouldn't be here if there wasn't a reason. If I wasn't in the system, that's probably where I'd be. Because in 2003, I was training for the Navy… I was gonna be a military cop, so I mean, I do have a lot of respect for that aspect. EMTs, firefighters, any kind of service provider who puts their life on the line. (Sally)

However, there were people who viewed the police as untrustworthy or as actors who would not treat them with respect or fairness. Even if they were no longer engaged in criminal behavior, these individuals stated that they were fearful of the police. This viewpoint typically resulted from two factors. First, people cited direct, negative experiences with police prior to their incarceration. As a result, people stated that they didn't trust police and didn't believe that police would help them if they were a victim of a crime or experienced a conflict. The second was an adherence to a particular code or cultural belief that the police are to be avoided or viewed with suspicion. Although individuals may no longer engage in crime or be a part of a "street" culture, this value system was still deeply embedded into their way of thinking about and interacting with police.

Interviewer: Would you feel comfortable calling the police if something happened? Like if you're, you had property stolen, or if you had your stuff vandalized? It's a tough question.

Rico: Yeah, it is a tough question, because I was raised in the hood. We don't-we're not supposed to call the police whatsoever.

Interviewer: You still kind of feel that code, kind of value system?

Rico: Once you grow up, it becomes a part of you. It's like, "oh man, well, somebody broke into my house, lucky I wasn't here".

People who grew up with this value system expressed that one of the more challenging aspects of adopting a "conventional" lifestyle was the expectation that the police are called if there is an altercation or other type of problem. Many expressed a reluctance to call the cops if the need arose (i.e. they or their property were victimized, had an altercation with another person, etc.) and some admitted that even though they knew that is what you are "supposed to do", that they would still likely avoid involving the police.

The range of attitudes towards police officers held by returning citizens is not unexpected. Police officers (and probation officers) were often the primary actor representing the legal system that people directly interacted with, therefore, these interactions along with unique cultural values regarding the police are likely going to shape people's views of police trustworthiness or utilizing the police as a resource following their release from prison.

Perceptions of fairness and justness of the law

When discussing criminal justice system and the legal actors within it who are responsible for creating laws or ensuring "justice" (judges, prosecutors, public defenders), most people viewed the system and these individuals unfavorably, stating

the system was "corrupt" or these actors were motivated by an agenda other than promoting fairness and justice within the legal system.

> It's very corrupt. You're guilty until you can prove you're innocent and you know money talks. You can go pay your lawyer $25,000 and you're not going to go to jail for whatever you did. (Lucky)
>
> *****
>
> I think it's crooked. It's just how everything operates. I mean it's just everything is designed to keep you down, you know, it's like once you make a bad decision and get caught up doing it then it's hard to get up out of the system…You can have somebody that has a clean record, somebody else that has a clean record and they had the same charge, but one gets three and the other one gets probation, you know I mean? So if it wasn't crooked and why is it different? (Steve C.)
>
> *****
>
> Man, this is how I feel. You do the crime, you do your time. But, if it was really a judicial system, it would focus on justice. Gaining revenue off of incarceration is not justice, that's indentured service. (Eli)

Attitudes about the criminal justice system more broadly, like those shared above, were typically informed by direct interactions, stories from the news, research articles and books[15], or experiences that were shared with them by family members or peers. Therefore, while attitudes towards police or probation officers appears to be primarily influenced by direct experience and adherence to cultural norms, attitudes about more abstract issues of justice or the fairness of the law tend to be more informed through the accumulation of information from a variety of sources including lived experience and empirical data.

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[15] I had two individuals recommend books. The first recommended Michele Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, and the other recommended *The Hate Factory* by Georgelle Hirliman about the 1980 riots at a prison in New Mexico.

"The system works if you work it": Complexities in how the law is perceived and experienced

Finally, it is important to reiterate that legal consciousness is a dynamic, ever-evolving concept that continuously incorporates new experience and knowledge gained by the individual. Some people held attitudes that varied based on which aspect of the law was being discussed or for particular actors (i.e. police versus law makers) while others held attitudes that encompassed a broad array of legal topics and actors (i.e. the law is unjust, all lawyers are corrupt, etc.). Additionally, about half of the people I spoke with discussed how their views regarding police or the criminal justice system more broadly changed over time, usually as a result of their incarceration. Prior to their incarceration (or most recent incarceration for those who had cycled in and out of prison), returning citizens generally spoke about possessing either a dismissive or resistant attitude towards the law. For those who previously held a dismissive view towards the law, they described not caring whether they broke a law or whether they were arrested or incarcerated. To these individuals, they often adhered to a street code to resolve disputes or to govern their behavior rather than the laws and rules of conventional society. Oftentimes, conflicts with the police, getting arrested, and serving time in prison were viewed as accepted risks of this street life. However, due to their desire to be a member of that conventional society, these individuals have adopted a new adherence to and respect for the law that includes the actors as well. For those who had viewed the law and criminal justice actors with distrust or contempt, some voiced a struggle with viewing the legal system as legitimate and a reluctance to rely on the police or courts to resolve a problem. When asked if his views about the criminal justice system have changed since his incarceration, Randolph replied:

Not really. I guess the only view that really changed is, when it comes to me being successful and getting through things, I can't blame everybody else for all the operation they did, they got me like this. After a while, you start thinking, "Damn, I got myself like this." That's the only thing that really changed in my mind.

Randolph acknowledged that while he still believed the criminal justice system to be biased and overly punitive, he felt that in order to be successful upon his release from prison, that he would need to accept greater responsibility for his choices and behavior.

I don't want to deal with them at all. Worse case, I guess, if something really crazy happens and you gotta call them to handle something so you don't handle it yourself.

Therefore, despite still having a general distrust of the system, Randolph was willing to adhere to the laws due to a desire to remain out of prison, but still wanted to minimize his interactions with police as much as possible.

This thought process speaks to the broad typologies of legal consciousness identified by Ewick and Silbey (1998) that can be used to frame how individuals think about and use the law in their lives. The first typology is "before the law", where the law is perceived and experienced as external to everyday life, impartial, fair, and legitimate. The "with the law" typology treats the law as an instrument to be wielded or a game that individuals can participate in to achieve goals or acquire resources. Finally, the "against the law" typology recognizes the power dynamics within legal relationships and how the law can disempower or oppress individuals, which may result in various forms of resistance to the law. These typologies do not have discrete or clearly defined boundaries and individuals can move between typologies or exist

within multiple typologies at the same time (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). Also, research

has demonstrated that social and situational contexts can influence the extent to which

law is salient in an individual's life and how the individual interacts with the law

within those contexts (Levine & Mellema, 2001). The stories shared by returning

citizens often aligned with the broad typologies identified by Ewick and Silbey and

demonstrated how people can transition from one typology to another.

> I feel that you know, the system works if you work it. And I don't mean that in like um, a take it and leave it kind of way. You know, like in my case, I use my probation officer as not a pawn in a chess game, but like you know [a resource]. (Sally)

Sally choosing to use her relationship with her PO as a way to gain access to resources

or as an additional source of social support demonstrates a "with the law" approach to

this particular relationship to the law. It indicates that she views herself as an active

participant in her post-release supervision and identifies how to make this process

work to her advantage.

> Sometimes, it's fair. Sometimes, it's not. I guess it's part of life. Some guys get justice. Some get injustice. Some guys are in prison might not be guilty but they're in prison. My situation, I can tell about me. I think it was fair. (Alvin)

Alvin's reflections about the criminal justice system demonstrates a more "before the

law" typology that views the law as something that cannot be challenged, but must be

accepted, regardless of whether the outcomes are "fair".

> Using the authorities is like the last resort just like a no way out situation. Where you know that if a conflict arises that you can't get out of it, it's either going to end up with you going to jail, they'll get hurt or you getting hurt, either way it's not going to be nice. (Sincere)

Sincere's resistance to use the law enforcement because it will likely result in a negatrive outcome aligns with the "against the law" typology, where the law and its legitimacy is viewed with skepticism and often responded to with resistance or avoidance.

"It's like a relief": Changes in legal consciousness over time

Finally a few individuals expressed that it was a relief to no longer have a lifestyle where they were afraid of the police or needing to avoid police interaction.

> …Now that I'm not in the criminal activity. They could be all around me. It doesn't bother me because I'm not doing nothing to be paranoid about or they'd be suspicious about or anything like that. It's like a relief. It's a great comfort. It's a relief not to live like that. (E-man)
>
> *****
>
> I actually feel safe, I actually feel more safe seeing them and maybe it's because I'm in the homeless situation, I feel more safety than I did before I went in. (Kisha)

People often attributed these changes in attitudes towards the criminal justice system to growing older, gaining maturity, or gaining insight on their past behavior and changing their prior ways of thinking.

> When you're young, you look up to cops. You think they are cool. You want to be a cop. Then I got to the like teenage years and it's like "fuck the cops", and now I'm moving into more of adulthood…when I see them, it's not "fuck the cops" or "I want to be a cop" right now. Right now it's the good state of limbo, where I think everybody should be, and that is cops are here for a reason. Yes they are good hardworking people just like anybody else. They're doing their job. They're trying to maintain peace and order. I get that. But you have to be suspicious of any type of authority. Not every cop is good. No. Not every person is good. (Kaanachi)
>
> *****
>
> I've been in the category where me versus the law, me against the law or stuff like that. I did that, I've been young and dumb. That's why I like to call it.

I've been immature in a lot of times in my life because I don't care about the law. I get out, I'm okay about that. I'm going to do what I want to do. (Fred)

Kaanachi spoke about how his views about police have changed as he transitioned from childhood to adulthood. Fred also reflected on how he used to think about the law when he was younger and involved in a life of crime, but attributed his change in attitude to both becoming more mature as he got older as well as shifting his focus from himself to his family. Others also attributed their change in attitude as a result of thinking of their children or partners and a desire to make decisions and live a life that benefit those they care about. This is consistent with research on desistance from crime that find certain life events such as employment, marriage, and having children can act as "turning points" from a deviant to a more conventional lifestyle (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1995). Although these turning points are often discussed in relation to the development of social bonds, it could be suggested (and will be discussed further in chapter 5) that the development of these social bonds may result in changes in legal consciousness. Regardless of the reason for changing their attitudes towards the law (or at a minimum, changing the way in which they interact with actors of the law), it was clear from people's experiences that changes in their legal consciousness were an important factor in their reentry process, particularly in how they interacted with law enforcement and navigated the legal rules and constraints in their life.

Conclusion

This first results chapter describes some of the more direct impacts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness on people's reentry process. Through the stories shared by these individuals, it is evident that these three concepts play a substantial role in their reentry experience. There was evidence that all four types of

social bonds described by Hirschi placed an important role in people's ability to form connections with conventional society. It was also clear that those I interviewed experienced stigma from a variety of sources and that those experiences could be through direct interaction with other individuals, through particular organizational policies such as employer hiring practices, or more general perceptions of the negative attitudes they believe the public holds about people with criminal backgrounds. Finally, while more difficult for people to articulate directly, it was evident that their involvement within the criminal justice system shaped the way in which they experienced, thought about, and interacted with the law. Their stories also support prior research on legal consciousness in that this concept is dynamic, continuously changing as a result of interactions with the law, information gained through observations or other sources, and daily lived experience. In sum, these findings all provide support that the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness are important factors to consider in regards to individuals' reentry experiences following release from prison. However, it was clear from the stories shared with me, that these concepts do not operate in isolation to one another and that there are many complex and unique ways in which these theoretical concepts relate to one another, further shaping individuals' reentry experiences. In the next chapter, I discuss how social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness relate to each other and how those relationships impact the reentry process. The inter-relationships between these theoretical concepts provide a more comprehensive understanding of their role in how people navigate the various social and legal obstacles that they encounter when released from prison.

Chapter 5

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

It's already a stress for them to wanna hire me, you know what I mean? They're already takin' a risk in hiring you and then having to give you all this extra time off to take care of all this other stuff. Ninety percent of the people aren't willing to do that, you know what I mean? (Terry)

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed how social bond formation, experiences of stigma, and the legal consciousness of returning citizens have direct influences on the reentry process for these men and women. Many of the stories shared by people provided further support for the role of these concepts in reentry. It is in this chapter, however, where I identify and describe the ways in which these theoretical concepts, often studied in isolation, are actually inter-related and together shape the reentry process. People's experiences provided evidence that social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness, are dynamically related to one another. While certain relationships may be more apparent, such as the relationship between experiences of stigma and social bond formation, the relationship between legal consciousness and both stigma and social bonds is an area that we really know very little about.

The relationships found between concepts were highly varied. Some relationships appeared more "causal" in nature, such as experiences of stigmatization from employers resulting in challenges in obtaining employment. Other relationships were more nuanced, with day-to-day events and social interactions resulting in ongoing changes in the relationship between theoretical concepts. An example of this more subtle influence would be anticipation of stigma and attitudes about the law. As individuals encountered stigmatization from police or probation officers, or did *not*

encounter anticipated stigmatization, their attitudes towards these criminal justice actors and the way they interacted with them changed. Similarly, as people engaged in positive interactions with police and probation officers, their perception that these criminal justice actors would stigmatize them was altered.

In regards to how these relationships impacted the reentry process, there was no clear or consistent process that could be documented. For example, the "presence or absence" of particular concepts (i.e. the presence of stigma and the absence of social bonds, the presence of "before the law" coupled with the absence of stigma, etc.) could not be easily combined to account for challenges or successes experienced by returning citizens during their reentry process. Two individuals could both experience stigma from employers, both take an "against the law" approach towards the criminal justice system, and both have social bonds such as community involvement and prosocial attachments, but their reentry experiences were still distinct from one another. This is because the nature of those social bonds, the way in which an individual responds to stigmatization, and the way someone thinks about and experiences the law are so individualized that broad categorizations simply cannot account for the dynamic, subjective relationships between concepts or their impact on the reentry process. Therefore, this chapter does not attempt to identify a specific model of these inter-relationships between concepts and reentry, but will instead focus on the unique variations found in how concepts influenced one another as well as impacted the reentry process. First I'll discuss the relationship between social bonds and stigma, followed by discussions about the relationships between legal consciousness and social bonds, and finally legal consciousness and stigma.

Social Bonds and Stigma

"…Your charges matter": Stigma and Employment

      The most apparent relationships between experiences of stigma and social bond formation lies in the area of hiring practices and policies in regards to employing an individual with a criminal background. Employment was discussed in the previous chapter as an important social bond to conventional society as well as a source of stigmatizing experiences, and it's of no surprise that the process of seeking out and obtaining employment is related to the ways in which individuals with criminal records are stigmatized in our society. As discussed in chapter 2, individuals with certain types of felony convictions may be legally prohibited from particular employment positions or even obtaining vocational certification or licensure.[16] Beyond these legally mandated or permissible occupational exclusions, employers often have the discretion to refrain from hiring someone as a result of their criminal background. Prior research has found that the reasoning employers used for not hiring someone with a criminal conviction ranges from fear of work-related violence or crime, a lack of education or employment history, and offense type (Williams, 2007; Harris & Keller, 2005; Albright & Denq, 1996; Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008; Giguere & Dundes, 2002). As a result of this stigmatization, many individuals with criminal backgrounds face significant difficulties in obtaining employment, particularly full-time employment. This is a critical obstacle in the reentry process due

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[16] In Delaware alone there are 543 codified employment and certification exclusions written into the state code, and 248 of those restrictions are mandatory or automatically applied, with no discretionary decision-making permitted (ABAcollateralconsequences.org).

to the importance of employment as a social bond to promote an investment into and connections with conventional society (Bahr, Harris, Fisher, & Armstrong, 2010; Sampson and Laub, 1990).

> All of the [prison classes] fool you, saying that all you got to do is to get your foot in the door and get the interview. "Your charges aren't going to matter". Well, your charges matter. People don't call because of your charges. (Cookie)

Cookie, who had never been involved in the criminal justice system until her recent incarceration, was not aware of how much an impact the stigma surrounding her criminal background would have on her ability to gain employment. This was exacerbated by the fact that the programs she completed while incarcerated also downplayed the impact her criminal background would have on her job prospects. The majority of people shared stories about how they believed they were denied employment as a result of their criminal record. They varied however in describing when in the hiring process they experienced stigma. Some discussed filing dozens of applications and never receiving any phone calls for interviews.

> Most of the time when you put [in an application], nobody's calling back, I have over 56 applications out there. (Susan)

Others received interviews, a few of which felt those interviews were very successful, only to never hear back from the employer after the background checks were performed, or in the case of those who called for an update on their application, were told they were not being considered for the position because of their criminal background.

> Lucky: Everywhere, I was getting turned down. I had five interviews and I just kept getting turned down, "I'm sorry, sorry."

Interviewer: They said that to you, that they're not hiring you?

Lucky: They said they have to do a background check and when we do the background check, "We'll call you back."

Interviewer: You never got a call back?

Lucky: I never got a call back.

Lucky's numerous interviews indicate that he was initially viewed as qualified for the positions he applied for, but that his criminal background was preventing him from securing a job offer. Whether it is a result of employer stigma regarding people with criminal backgrounds or other factors, only 24 of the men and women I spoke with had secured at least part-time employment since their release, and 19 reported that they experienced or perceived stigma from an employer during their job searches. These findings suggest that despite people's motivation to seek employment, the stigma and negative attributes attached to an offender label, and what those attributes imply about an individual's worth ethic or risk to an employer or business, made it incredibly challenging for individuals to develop this critical social bond. Some individuals were so desperate to prove themselves to employers that they were willing to demonstrate their skills and value by working for free.

> Ace Hardware. I'd seen last night they were hiring and I'm like, let me one day get nicely dressed and go in there and just [tell them] "I need a job. Can't you give me a chance? I'll work free for 30 days just so you could see how I am, that if you like me keep me. I'll work anywhere for first 30 days for nothing just for you to see what kind of person I am and I am a very good people person, just give me a 30 days. If you don't like me or something is missing or whatever, send me on my way." (Susan)

Susan was not the only person who suggested a "trial" period with employers.

Andrew, who is enrolled in the Achievement Center reentry program was connected to

an internship program to become a cook at a restaurant which provided him job experiences and new skills that helped him gain employment. Several people wished for a program available while still incarcerated or in work release to allow individuals to intern or volunteer at local businesses to demonstrate their value and possibly be hired for that job once released. This type of program could dispel stigma around those with criminal backgrounds and ease employer concerns regarding the risk of hiring someone who has been incarcerated.

"I go to work, go home, sit at home": Stigma and Preventative Isolation

> I don't date. I don't go to parties. They had a party at what they call Fall Festival at the church that I've been. I said I'm not going. People can't understand why. Really? Do you remember what I was convicted of? (Ernie)

The relationship between stigma and securing employment is often related to the concept of risk. Employers have been shown to perceive the hiring of people with criminal backgrounds as a potential risk to their employees or business (Williams, 2007; Harris & Keller, 2005; Albright & Denq, 1996; Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008; Giguere & Dundes, 2002). Returning citizens therefore, have to challenge or dispel this perception that they are a risk to employers in order to participate in this particular aspect of conventional society. In contrast, the second relationship that emerged in the data between social bonds and stigma relates to the risk that returning citizens perceived regarding their participation in community activities.

Approximately a quarter of individuals described how the perception or anticipation of stigma would limit their willingness or ability to connect with their communities. In these situations, a previous history of direct stigmatization was not

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necessary for limiting someone's involvement in their community. Simply anticipating a potential negative or stigmatizing experience was sufficient for some men and women to socially withdrawal (Moore, Stuewig, & Tangney, 2015). Many people framed their social isolation as a deliberate choice and spoke about the "risk" of attending church, a local community event, or even running day-to-day errands. This risk was typically defined as police contact, an incident that could potentially place them in violation of their probation requirements and ultimately could result in re-incarceration.

> Interviewer: Has that fear or not wanting to come into contact with the police has that stopped you from going places or leaving your home?
>
> Don: Sure. Absolutely.
>
> Interviewer: Since you've been home that's happened?
>
> Don: I don't want to be harassed or be stalked so I don't allow that. I go to work, go home, sit at home.

Don was so fearful of potential police contact as a result of a negative interaction or altercation out in public that he willingly chose to spend most of his free time inside his home rather than out in the community.

> *Steve had been released for approximately two weeks prior to his interview with me. At about 15 minutes into the interview I heard beeping noise and a female, computerized voice say "low battery, please charge" or something to that effect. I looked at Steve and he said "Oh my god, that's my ankle bracelet, it needs charged". He asked me to contact his PO to get a charging cable so that he could plug his bracelet into the wall socket to charge during the rest of our interview. The "low battery" announcement was made several times before Steve was able to connect the charger. He looked completely embarrassed and even apologized several times for the interruption to our interview. Steve said that his bracelet going off like that was "his worst nightmare" when out in public and that he dreaded going to the grocery store*

or riding the bus because of the looks he would get from people whenever his bracelet started making noise (which happened when the battery was low or there was a communication error) and how embarrassed and bad it made him feel. (Field notes from interview)

Like Steve, people who chose to withdrawal from their communities feared having a negative social interaction in a public space (i.e. store, church, community concert, or other event) as a result of perceiving the public as being suspicious or fearful because of their criminal background, which could result in that individual calling the police. People who were most weary of this potential for police contact were those who had been convicted of sex offenses. They recognized that their names, photographs, and offense types were publically accessible, and perhaps disseminated to members of the community due to community notification requirements. Therefore, they felt like they could be easily recognized and targeted in public. Ernie shared that he always felt anxious when out in public because of the fear that people would recognize him as a registered sex offender:

> Ernie: …I literally run for the exits. I get in, do what I need to and I shop after hours so that I don't have any interaction.
>
> Interviewer: It sounds like this fear of other people maybe knowing that you have a sex offense or getting wrapped up into some police contact has stopped you from your normal day-to-day activities?
>
> Ernie: Yeah, absolutely.

Prior to his incarceration, Ernie was actively involved in his church. Since his release, he has refused to attend church or participate in any church functions, as referenced in his quote at the beginning of this section. There is no formal restriction on attending church services or activities. Ernie stated that his pastor has been very welcoming since he's been home and has invited him to return to church, but Ernie chooses to decline these invites because it is not worth the "risk".

This withdrawal in order to avoid negative encounters with individuals who may stigmatize returning citizens because of their criminal past often results in difficulty making new friends and supports. People often stated that they were extremely cautious about who they socialized with, accepted interactions with on Facebook or other social media outlets, as well as who they shared their past with because of fear that they would be rejected or become involved with a person or situation that would lead to them getting in trouble or using alcohol or drugs again.

> I'd say, like, it's a rough experience. It's lonely and the charge destroys your life. What I would say is this: do whatever you can to just like not end up in that place, you know what I mean? (Steve C.)

Steve, along with five others who expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation, demonstrate the power of perceived or anticipated stigmatization on an individuals' behavior. These individuals didn't need to experience actual stigmatization, but because it is so socially accepted (and legitimized through the legal stigmatization of people with criminal records) that individuals with criminal pasts are to be viewed negatively or avoided socially, they chose to socially isolate themselves in order to prevent such stigmatizing experiences. This resulted in difficulty becoming involved in their local community and develop additional social bonds and connections with conventional society. The preventative isolation that returning citizens may choose to engage in is not well-addressed in the existing literature except few studies, primarily focused on people convicted of sex offenses, that find anticipation of social rejection or negative social interactions are related to social withdrawal behaviors (Winnick & Bodkin, 2008; Mercado, Alvarez, & Levenson, 2008; Levenson, D'Amora, & Hern, 2007).

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> Stay around positive people, or people that are doing better than you and motivating you to do better. (Steve C.)

It is important to note that not every individual experienced stigma or was negatively impacted by the experiences or perceptions of stigma in their lives. Twenty people stated they had not experienced a stigmatizing experience, and five reported that they neither experienced nor perceived stigma from any source since they've been released. Of these 20 individuals who had not had a first-hand stigmatizing experience, 18 had multiple sources of social support, 10 were employed full-time and 4 were employed part-time. All 14 of the employed individuals also reported multiple sources of social support. While a more statistical analysis of these numbers is beyond the scope of the current project, these findings do seem to suggest that those who had not reported experiencing stigma also tended to have multiple social bonds. Additionally, people who were able to return to jobs they held prior to their incarceration or were able to gain employment through social connections did not face the same, pervasive stigma experienced by individuals who had to seek out employment on their own.

> Chimmy: I had a job within the first 60 days.
>
> Interviewer: Tell me what that was like. Was it a job that you already had connections with?
>
> Chimmy: It comes down to who you know. I had somebody help me get a job.
>
> <div align="center">*****</div>
>
> Interviewer: It's great that you found a job. How quickly were you able to get that job?
>
> José: Few days…I know the owner of the company.

Interviewer: You know the owner of company? That helps. Was it a job that you had before you got a locked up? [José nods] Okay, so you were able to reconnect and go right back.

Those with access to employment immediately following their release, such as José, avoided the stigmatizing experiences of submitting dozens of applications and not getting any calls, or going on interviews but not receiving an offer once the employer ran a background check, like the experience Lucky had that was shared above.

As discussed earlier, three individuals reported experiencing stigma from former peers because they were now living a crime-free lifestyle. Each of these individuals had large positive social networks including family members, parents of their children's friends, or members of their religious group, and were therefore able to limit their interactions with negative peers.

I don't want to be around negative people. If you can't find anything positive and you're constantly negative, I'll be like, "I got to go". Because that negativity is what I always lived in and it's so easy to go right back. (Susan)

*****

Because when you come out and you have to rely on so many people, you're relying on some of the negative people too because that's what you're familiar with, so you're back with that relationship and in need of that relationship, what got you where you were in the first place. (Cookie)

Cookie wasn't describing her own experience, but sharing her views on why some of the women she was incarcerated with kept coming back to prison. People lacking supportive family members or peers may be more likely to report perceived stigma from others but are unable to cut those people out of their lives like Susan has been able to do because they don't have anyone else to turn to. In contrast, those who had maintained pro-social attachments while incarcerated, found employment through social connections or returned to a previous job, or were able immediately rejoin community groups that they were a part of their lives prior to their incarceration (i.e.

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religious groups), generally reported less experiences of actual, perceived or anticipated stigma compared to individuals that did not have any pre-existing bonds with conventional society. This buffering effect of social support experiences of stigma has not received attention within the field of criminal justice, however, the mental health and family literatures have consistently found social support to act as buffer to experiences of stress, depression, and other negative emotions (Cohen & McKay, 1984; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl, & Malik, 2010).

It is clear from the stories and examples shared above that stigma and social bonds are related to one another, but this relationship can take on various forms. The most obvious is that the stigmatization of individuals with criminal backgrounds in our society results in challenges to finding employment, a social bond that has been consistently found to be related to whether an individual desists from future criminal behavior. Additionally, pro-social attachments acted as a buffer to stigmatizing experiences, such as allowing people to secure employment without facing rejection from employers or providing sufficient positive support that people could cut negative peers out of their lives. Less expected was the impact that anticipated stigma had on some people's decisions to participate in their community. Those that anticipated a high likelihood of stigmatization during social interactions were more likely to engage in preventative isolation in order to avoid these negative experiences compared to returning citizens who did not anticipate such stigmatization as a result of their social participation.

Social Bonds and Legal Consciousness

In addition to perceptions or actual experiences of stigma impacting people's ability to develop social bonds with their community, legal consciousness also had substantial influence on how individuals were able to form bonds with conventional society. In regards to individuals who have recently been released from prison, legal consciousness was mostly discussed as the ways the criminal justice system constrained their day-to-day behaviors. These constraints typically included post-release requirements such as check-ins with supervision officers and mandated community treatment programming. People's stories also touched on how fear or distrust of the law resulted in limiting social involvement, thus hindering social bond formation. However, others shared stories about using the law as a resource to help forge social bonds with the community. Each of these relationships between legal consciousness and social bonds will be discussed.

"I have all these obligations": Legal Constraints and Barriers to Employment

> I got headaches out of this world all weekend because I'm like, okay I need to get a job, I need to get a job, but I got probation, TASC, I have After Care. There's different days, who's going to hire somebody that can't work every day in a week. (Phil)

The mark of a criminal record and the resulting stigmatization can complicate obtaining a job. In addition, the requirements of post-release supervision pose serious challenges to employment due to restrictions these requirements place on an individual's behavior and decision-making. Although determined by the type of offense and sentence, all experienced varying degrees of the following post-release supervision requirements (information from Delaware Department of Corrections):

- Weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly check-ins with supervision officer

- Officer check-ins with residence, place of employment, or school

- House arrest or home confinement

- GPS monitoring

- Curfews

- Drug Testing

- Mandated substance abuse treatment programming (i.e. Crest Aftercare, Narcotics or Alcoholics Anonymous, DUI classes, etc.).

- Mandated counselling for sex offending behavior, anger management, or mental health needs

- Court-based service referral programs (Treatment Access Center or TASC)

- Wilmington Reentry Court, a court-supervised intensive supervision program

Almost every returning citizen had more than one of these expectations as part of their post-release supervision, resulting in multiple weekly or monthly appointments that they were required to attend or risk violating their probation, which could result in re-incarceration. When discussing these post-release supervision requirements, people described the challenges these created regarding their availability to find work or maintain employment.

> …it's hard when you got a lot of appointments to make you know what I mean? Last time I got out and had level three probation, TASC, Aftercare, and it's like, how are you supposed to maintain a job? How are you supposed to maintain an appointment? How do you go for a job interview and tell them, "okay I need Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, I need two hours, three hours lunch break because I got to go deal with this stuff." It's already a stress for

them to wanna hire me, you know what I mean? They're already takin' a risk in hiring you and then having to give you all this extra time off to take care of all this other stuff. Ninety percent of the people aren't willing to do that, you know what I mean. (Terry)

Terry recognized the challenge his situation presented to employers who may already stigmatize someone with a criminal background and therefore be unwilling to accommodate such a restricted work schedule, especially from an employee that they are already hesitant to hire.

You got to go to this place, Monday or Tuesday and this one Monday and you're trying to explain to a job, "Well, you know, I have all these obligations I have to go to and if I don't I would be incarcerated" … If I'm running a business, then I can't have guys that I need on the job needing this day off and then, you're calling, "[probation] hasn't seen me yet. It'll only be an hour." Then, it would turn out to be two to three hours… I do understand the employer's side. (Randolph)

Both Randolph and Terry perceive their probation requirements as a hindrance to their ability to find a job. They believe that employers will be unwilling to work around their schedule of check-ins and other appointments or that they will lose their job because they can't come into work when their employer needs them to. Cookie was able to find a job, but shared similar concerns about whether her employer would be willing to work around her demanding schedule of appointments. Fortunately, her employer was incredibly supportive and accommodating: she stated that her boss had spent time in prison and knew about the expectations placed on probationers to complete programs, check-in with their probation officer, etc. However, Cookie had the added obstacle of being on house arrest

…I'm on [home]confinement, so it is not like I can just go anywhere I want to go when I want to go, she's [probation officer] gotta have everything I'm doing in the computer. So first when I worked at Burger King it was a nightmare but I've since, probably for three weeks now, I've been at

Subway…I'm on a set schedule. I probably applied 10 different places with no call backs until I was able to get the job at Subway. They were more than willing to help [and] I said "well I have these ankle bracelets and I'm going to be on home confinement, are you going to be okay?" She knows that I can't just -- if she needs me to work, she can't just call me and say can you come in today or something like that…And so for them to work around that is great because you do need people on call to come in for, if somebody calls in sick or something like that. And they're really great about it, you know? (Cookie)

Beyond constraints on their work schedule, other individuals discussed how employers were reluctant to hire someone with a criminal background because the employer did not want to have to interact with or report to the probation officer.

Another thing that makes it hard to get a job is when they know you are probation. They don't want your probation officer showing up at your job, they really don't. And you don't want your probation officer to call and say "Hi my name is, and Susan works there, right? (Susan)

Susan indicates that the thought of having to work with probation officers may discourage employers from hiring someone on probation. Another person, Howdie, explained that law enforcement check-ins at his place of employment cost him not one, but two, different jobs.

Two days after I was working [at the country club], the New Castle detectives came down, pulled their car in front of the pro shop, got out with all their gear on…scared the heck out of the people there that was there and next thing [Employer] said, "I got to let you go."…but that's not the end of it…I went to [another country club]…He hired me on the spot. This was in Kent County. The previous job was in New Castle County. So I'm thinking maybe I can have a chance here being in Kent county. I worked there two days and the same thing happened. The local police came in, packin' again. They act like big cops…They couldn't just pull up into the parking lot, park their car and walk in like gentlemen and just go approach [the employer]…because both of them, in both instances knew that I had a felony. Both instances they said, "we'll talk about it". Both [employers]. "I want you here."

Howdie, who is 72 years old, had an extensive employment history working with professional golfers at high-end country clubs and resorts and stated that when he told employers that he had been convicted of a sex offense, they still wanted to hire him because of his job experience. However, when police arrived and made a public spectacle, the employers felt that they had to let him go because of the negative attention that their golf course was receiving. It's unclear why law enforcement chose to arrive at Howdie's place of employment in such force and with such urgency (when asked, Howdie stated that he does not know why they behaved the way that they did versus calling or calmly showing up at the golf course to check on his whereabouts). Howdie expressed frustration at losing these jobs because employers did not want to have law enforcement making patrons anxious or uncomfortable and despair because he doesn't believe that he will be able to find a job in his field again because of these incidents. It is clear that people experienced obstacles to finding and keeping a job because of both the formal legal requirements of their supervision and the accompanying extensive accommodations, as well as a wariness of employers to law enforcement contact.

"I would rather die than to call the police" Police Contact and Limiting Social Interaction

> I would rather die than to call the police. If anything happens to me, I want somebody else to call the police because I don't want any police contact, zero, none, whatsoever. I don't want to be violated and have to go back to prison. If I get hit by a car and I can still reach to get my phone, I'm not going to do it, I'll have somebody else call the police saying call the paramedics because I will not do it. (John)

Almost everyone discussed their fear of being sent back to prison, not because they felt they would commit a crime, but because they violated a condition of their supervision. In addition to the various check-ins, appointments and classes listed earlier, people were often also required to pay fines or restitution and avoid having contact with police as part of their probation requirements.

> It makes the fear of God in you that probation's going to violate you, you're going to go back to jail because you can't pay your fines. (Susan)
>
> *****
>
> I'm always on time. You see me I'm still here at 10 o'clock I'm here at 9:15, I don't want no problems being late or nothing because that can violate me so I'd rather be early than late.(Don)

While some people, expressed anxiety about paying their fines or attending all of their other supervision-related appointments, almost everyone discussed their fear of police contact. "Police contact" was considered any extended interaction with law enforcement (i.e. pulled over while driving, questioned by an officer called to a scene) and could be cause for a revocation of their probation if connected with criminal wrong-doing or violation of probation requirements. People's fear of having police contact as a result of being in a particular area of their community, driving down the street, or participating in a community event led some people to socially withdrawal in order to reduce the possibility of contact with law enforcement. However, for some, this limitation on social involvement within their community is a necessary concession for minimizing their risk to end up back in prison. This finding is especially interesting in light of previous research that has examined fear of police contact in criminal-justice involved populations. In particular, Alice Goffman's (2009) ethnographic research on the young, black, urban poor in Philadelphia found that these young men

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were fearful of police contact and would avoid interactions with law enforcement at all costs, living lives as fugitives within these highly policed neighborhoods. The feelings of the men in Goffman's research appear justified given the intense surveillance of black, inner-city neighborhoods and the disproportionate number of young black men currently incarcerated. However, the same sentiments were shared by the returning citizens that I interviewed, including white men and women, older individuals, and those living in rural and low-crime communities", a stark contrast to the context of Goffman's research. Based on the parallels found between these two distinct groups of individuals, it could be argued that despite individual and social differences, the way that people experience the law in their lives, particularly negative encounters and perceptions of the law, has a profound impact on individuals' willingness to be involved in their communities and the quality of their social relationships.

> Interviewer: You were saying earlier [about] not getting your license for fear of-
>
> Don: -Being pulled over just for running two miles over the speed limit. That's police contact. It can be a violation, so I'll wait.
>
> Interviewer: Do you feel like that's limiting your life in any way, or you're willing to let it limit?
>
> Don: It limits me. It's embarrassing because my girl drives-she takes me to work, picks me up, takes me home. I wanna go over to her house, she has to come over to me, pick me up, drop me off, but she understands. She understands and I thank her every night for you know, takin' care of me, looking out for me. My dad I thank him when I go home "thank you for taking me to my PO and droppin' me off at work".

Don believes that having his license and driving around his community is too much of a risk for potential police contact. As a result, he is willing to limit his ability to visit with his girlfriend as well as attend social events in his community, because for him,

the benefits of avoiding the police outweighs the costs of lost social connections and involvement with his community. Don's story is consistent with prior research on the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958) and how correctional control can impact romantic relationships, including the nature of relationships and the degree of intimacy shared within them (Comfort, 2009). While Don and other returning citizens are not incarcerated, their current experience with the law and the perceived amount of control it has over their behavior resulted in carefully calculated decisions regarding when and to what extent individuals engaged in social relationships with others. This included a fear of socializing with anyone who could be involved in criminal behavior. People expressed that they were extremely cautious of who they interacted with and whose homes they went to for fear that if the police got called on those individuals, they would also be in trouble simply for being in the same place at the same time.

> Dominic: I think it's level two [probation], so I don't have a lot of restrictions. I'm a little, maybe a little paranoid. I was afraid of any contact with the police for any reason. Every time I see a trooper's car, I get more concerned. I live in a house with four other people. I'm more concerned about… are they doing any drugs? I'm a little concerned about that.
>
> Interviewer: You're worried about their behavior, might have some kind of spillover, contamination on what you're trying to do, or not do?
>
> Dominic: Yeah. I tend to isolate myself.

Don and Dominic's stories, and those of other people who shared similar feelings regarding their fear of police contact, demonstrate how people's perceptions about the level of control the law has in their lives impacts their willingness to develop social bonds or participate in their community.

Beyond fear of police contact limiting people's willingness to develop bonds with their community, returning citizens also discussed how criminal justice policies and practices related to sentencing, visitation, and post-release supervision had a similar, negative impact on their ability to maintain existing relationships or develop new bonds once released.

> You're doing this and you're doing that, then soon something comes up that you can't pay…then you got this, the probation, and the other thing and then you get in trouble for not paying on something and then like "you got to go". You lose your job and you get locked up for 30 to 60 days and come back, try to find another job. (Steve C.)

Steve C. shares his frustrations with challenges of keeping up on his post-release supervision expectations on top of dealing with financial struggle and how an inability to pay a fine could lead to an incarceration and having to start the process all over. Even though Steve C. was fortunate to secure employment (on his own, without social connections), a violation of his post-release supervision could lead to a loss of his current job and the daunting process of re-establishing this social bond.

Other people shared their frustration resulting from efforts to stay in contact with their families while incarcerated. In particular, women whose family lived in the southern part of Delaware often lost out on family visits because the only correctional facility in the state for women is in northern Delaware, which made it difficult for family members who had financial hardships or transportation issues to have regular visits.

> Interviewer: Did you get to visit with your son and daughter while you were locked up?

Marie: It was every so often because I was in New Castle. Before I got incarcerated I totaled my mom's truck so I really had to humble myself because I couldn't expect my mom to take care of my two kids, come all the way to New Castle to come see me. Umm, I think I seen my son like 5 times.

Marie's family lived in the southern part of Delaware and had limited access to transportation, resulting in Marie only being able to see her children five times during her 11 month incarceration.

Interviewer: Did you get to visit with [your children] much when you were locked up?

Sally: My oldest daughter I couldn't because she was staying with my sister and brother-in-law and he works for DOC. So it was a conflict of interest and my middle child, she's real sensitive, so seeing me locked up probably wouldn't have been good for her mental state, but I did see my son when I came down to Sussex for work release.

Unlike Marie whose visitations with her family were limited by geographic and transportation issues, Sally was unable to visit with her oldest daughter because of policy that prevented the current guardian to visit an incarcerated person since they were employed through DOC. For Sally, it was criminal justice policies that prevented her to maintain face-to-face contact with her child. Another parent, JB, refused to have visitations with his son because the prison's visitation policy prohibited physical contact and all visits were conducted through a Plexiglas barrier. JB refused to continue discussing visitation with his child during his incarceration, but his brief description and demeanor suggested that he did not want to subject his child to such restricted, dehumanizing visitations.

Finally, individuals described frustration and discouragement they experienced when they felt that probation requirements were causing their existing bonds to weaken or break. Those that were fortunate and found jobs within the first few days or

weeks after their release shared how hard it was to feel like they were making progress in their lives, only to have probation requirements pull them back down.

> It felt like once I got to the point where I was working and I had things going for me, I had everything moving forward, and I had options, [probation] felt like a hindrance. Now it just felt like a ball and chain. It just felt like every step that I took, they were pullin'…like one day they called me from my house, while I was home, they were supposed to call early, before 10 o'clock, they didn't call, so I called at 10 o'clock, they told me I had to travel all the way back to Dover because their phones weren't workin'…if they say you gotta do, you gotta do. So I got up there and they said oh just, blow in this breathalyzer, you can go home,…my daughter was sick at the time, had to leave my daughter, got up there at like 11-something, had to drive back, got back home at midnight. It's just like things that they do like, to, really seem like this, push people back into a higher level of incarceration. (Eli)

Eli felt frustrated because he was achieving success in his life since his release from prison, but felt that the restrictions imposed on him through his post-release supervision were stifling his ability to achieve the independence that he wanted. Returning citizens discussed similar frustration with having found a decent job or found support in their lives, but then the legal restrictions placed on their lives caused strain to these bonds that they were trying to maintain. Einstein discusses this same issue in regards to spending time with his children.

> Einstein: I'm really depressed lately.
>
> Interviewer: What's making, you so depressed?
>
> Einstein: This.
>
> Interviewer: Being on the supervision?
>
> Einstein: Yeah. Holidays and Halloween that I couldn't do with my kids, I haven't seen my kids in five years. One of my son's birthday is Saturday. I don't even know what they look like anymore.

Interviewer: Has that been your choice to not have contact with them or is that court order?

Einstein: No. I'm allowed.

Einstein was convicted of a sex offense, and per his post-release supervision requirements, he is not able to participate in Halloween festivities or visit with his underage children. He stated that Halloween was one of the activities that he enjoyed most with this kids because it had been his favorite holiday. Finally, a few people discussed barriers to connecting with children and other family members due to not being permitted to leave the county where they are assigned probation.

> My goal was to go to Dover because it was easier to get housing down there and stuff like that but she told me she can't let me go to Dover because it was too far. They don't want to take a homeless transfer so I had to establish something here before she can transfer me. (Kisha)

Kisha wanted to move to Dover because that is where her family and primary sources of social support were located, however, Department of Corrections' policies regarding the transfer of homeless individuals to a different county prevented her from better access to these supports. Each of these examples of how the law restricts the formation or maintenance of social bonds in the lives of returning citizens aligns with other scholarship on disempowered or oppressed populations experience the law in their lives (Sarat, 1990; Goffman, 2009), which may explain why some individuals, such as Eli who earlier described the law as a force that is pulling him back.

> The State, they sit there and demand so much from that same person and yet, if you don't have a job, you're in violation of your probation. If you don't have a home, you're in violation of your probation. No matter what you do, there's always that time that they want to put you back somewhere. (David)

Despite these examples of how returning citizens felt the presence of the law in their life as a controlling and constraining force, there were other peoples who used

the law (i.e. probation officers, required programming, etc.) as a way of developing

connections with conventional society.

"…from walking to running, the right way": Using the Law to Develop Social Bonds

> I mean, it's tough to start over, I mean it's like learning how to walk again, but as long as you're dedicated eventually you'll go from walking to running, the right way. (Andrew)

During the interviews, several returning citizens stated that, while not an

enjoyable part of their life, their incarceration or the post-release supervision provided

opportunities for self-transformation. Individuals described how substance-abuse

treatment programs, education classes, mental health counselling, I-ADAPT, and other

classes they may have participated in while incarcerated have been beneficial since

their release from prison.

> [My fiancé] gets me mad sometimes and turns around just look at me like and I'll burst out laughing. When you piss me off I just think it's so funny. And before I would [call you] every name in the book, nothing polite. I took some of the tools that I've learned from the Key Village and I use some positive way. (Susan)

Susan described how proud she was of herself for learning how to control her temper

and handle frustration and conflict in more positive ways than she used to in the past.

For her, she felt that the programs she completed while incarcerated improved the way

she interacted with her partner and children. Alvin discussed how the programs he

completed while incarcerated helped him to recognize talents that he didn't know he

possessed.

> The only thing that I knew was doing crimes in the street. I'm holding guns in my hands, selling drugs. Now, I realized that I can use my hands for other good stuff.

Alvin was sharing this insight after describing a very positive job interview he recently had where he impressed the employer with how well he was able to operate the machinery they were testing him on. Both Susan and Alvin have experienced the direct benefits that their correctional programming has had on their ability to improve social relationships and potentially secure employment. Others shared how after earning their GEDs while incarcerated they are now motivated to continue their education by attending college. These individuals used their incarceration experience as way to gain valuable skills and resources that they then are using or plan to use to develop bonds to conventional society in the form of attachments to their children, jobs, and education. Instead of experiencing the law (and again, with this population it really is more appropriate to discuss legal consciousness specifically related to interactions and perceptions regarding the criminal justice system) as an oppressive or constraining force in their lives, they chose to see the system they were embedded in as an opportunity and utilized the resources that were made available.

The contrasts seen between those who viewed the law as oppressive and disempowering versus those who chose to see the system as an opportunity to take advantage of once again speak to the typologies of "against the law" and "with the law" identified by Ewick and Silbey (1998) that were discussed in chapter 4 that can be used to frame the different ways in which people think about and experience the law in their lives. In regards to the relationship between legal consciousness and social bond formation, the findings suggest that those who adopt an "against the law" legal consciousness, characterized by fear and avoidance of police or perceptions of

criminal justice policies and practices as restrictive, may be more likely to have challenges forming or maintaining social bonds. In contrast, a "with the law" legal consciousness, where individuals take advantage of the programming and resources made available during their incarceration or post-release supervision, may facilitate the development of social bonds.

Stigma and Legal Consciousness

> Police and the government pretty much look at your past before they look at your future. (JB)

The relationships between stigma and the way in which people experience or and think about the law in their lives were less varied than the relationships between legal consciousness and social bonds. The relationships mostly came through in discussions regarding interactions with probation and police offers or how their views of the criminal justice system, and police in particular, have changed over the course of time and as a result of their incarcerations. There was a commonly held belief that because of their criminal background, they would be viewed as less credible or trustworthy by probation officers and police, and less worthy of service or intervention if they needed to call on the police if they were victims of a crime. I will discuss these relationships in greater detail below.

Stigma and Police Interactions

Evidence of the relationship between stigma and legal consciousness was observed most often in the stories people shared regarding their perceptions of and interactions with police officers following their release from prison. There was a

perception among approximately two-thirds of returning citizens that if they were placed in a situation where they would need to interact with police that their criminal background would influence how law enforcement responded to them.

> As soon as they find out that I've had assault charges, they'll draw guns even with the smallest things. The traffic stops, as soon as they run my name, they'll come to me, pull guns out, throw me up against the car. (JB)

JB felt that because he had violent charges on his record that any minor interaction with police, such as a traffic stop, would result in a major episode that includes police officers pulling their guns on him. Others believed that they would likely be pulled over more often or suspected of criminal wrong doing by police because of their prior records. Randolph describes being stopped while driving and police wanting to search his vehicle:

> …police will pull you over, they see if you have anything, pull you over and then, they want to get you on violation of probation and my Sheriff, they would do all this stuff. Like, humiliate you-doing nothing wrong and it's like, what you said, your record reflect things…I've seen it, look at that and then, you're telling them, if you tell them, "No, I don't want you to search the car." Then, that drives up the whole process and it might take 40 minutes to over an hour and they're bringing dogs and everything. (Randolph)

Randolph goes on to state how in this particular interaction the police brought in the K9 unit to try and detect drugs in his vehicle. He states that the officers said the dog "made a hit", indicating that it detected drugs, and therefore gave the police probable cause to search his vehicle. According to Randolph, they never found anything illegal or that violated the conditions of his probation.

In regards to reporting victimization, a few people felt that the police may be more dismissive toward their claims. In this study, four people actually experienced the need to call the police because they were the victim of a crime.

> If I was one of those middle-aged guys with a wife and kids and a little white house or white picket fence and a dog named Fido, they would care and maybe actually look into something. They don't give shit about me. (Einstein).

Einstein felt that because he was homeless and on the registry that the police were not interested in helping him, and he did not expect them to try and find his stolen scooter. Dechelle's situation is somewhat different from Einstein's because she had wanted to call the police to report her roommate trying to sexually assault her, however, her alleged attacker actually called the police before she was able to.

> Dechelle: I got set for a couple years and then I just went through a year probation and my roommate, this guy, wanted to have sex with me against my wishes and I told him no. [One night] he came home, he was cracked out. He came home and suddenly I wake up and he standing over top of me with his stuff in his hands and said, "We're going to do something today, or else". I said okay, "We're going to duke it out." I knocked him back across the table and commenced to beat him up. He told me, "You're going to regret that." I said, "No, you're going to regret that". He called the police. I didn't know he would call the police. He called the police first.
>
> Interviewer: He called the police?
>
> Dechelle: He called the police on me but listen at this, I'm the one that got charged because it was his house. He called first and I wasn't on the lease. I lost my place and I got charged with criminal mischief and offensive touching… but that's what I had to do, that's what I had to do. I'm not going to allow any man take advantage of me.

Dechelle felt that if she had not just been released from prison or was considered an "ex-con" that the police would have taken her claim of assault more seriously and

would not have charged her with a crime. Although it was not totally clear from Dechelle's story, it does not appear that her roommate was charged with anything from that night. Whether these individuals' criminal records actually influenced the decision-making and behavior of law enforcement, each of these men and women perceived stigma from the police and felt that they were being treated differently because of their criminal past. These perceptions are again consistent with previous research that has examined the relationship between police and recently incarcerated men and women. These studies have found that returning citizens perceive law enforcement as targeting them unfairly and that the criminal justice system continues to view them as offenders, rather than "ex-offenders" (Taxman, 2005; Mobley, 2004; McGarrell, Zimmermann, Hipple, Corsaro, & Perez, 2005). As JB stated, "Police and the government pretty much look at your past before they look at your future."

Use of Surveillance Technology to Challenge Stigma

It's documentation that you're not doing anything wrong. I have no problem with [electronic monitoring]. That thing, that's my buddy. (Ernie)

One of the most surprising findings in regards to this relationship between stigma and legal consciousness is the large number of people that supported the use of police surveillance technology to monitor their own behavior as well as document police interactions. Although the use of surveillance technology was never explicitly asked about in the interview, almost a quarter of individuals stated that they were in support of recording police encounters through the use of police body cameras, cell phone recordings, and cameras installed in vehicles. Ernie was the only one who spoke

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about the benefit of his electronic monitoring bracelet because it was evidence of his own law-abiding behavior. However, others felt that video documentation of police interactions would provide evidence of both their lack of any wrong doing as well as potentially inappropriate police behavior. These individuals felt that because of their criminal record, police may feel that they do not have to follow protocol, and if a dispute arose in which they wanted to challenge a ticket or arrest, they believed that their record would result in them not being taken seriously in court. The video documentation of police interactions was therefore a form of evidence that they did not engage in any wrongdoing and therefore could not be violated or sent back to prison.

> What I'll do is I will spend as much money as I possibly can to equip my car with cameras, every single mirror. So just in case they try to plant something and I have a back-up on some kind of hard drive and have a feed in somewhere else so just in case these crooked, racist police do something that I have something to back up and I will sue the state, the police and everybody else. (John)

<div align="center">*****</div>

> I think the law is just as corrupt as we are. You see it all the time now. I'm glad that now there's more cameras out there …because nobody would believe us before. Nobody wanted to believe that. And that allowed us to come with the light. (Susan)

John, and Susan wanted to use cameras was a way to challenge the law if they felt they were being treated unfairly as a result of stigma because of their criminal background, or race (which will be discussed in the next chapter). They also felt that recordings of interactions between individuals who have criminal backgrounds and law enforcement was a strategy that could be implemented to create a more "fair" criminal justice system. One person advocated for the recording of court proceedings as well. Rob shared an experience where he felt he was being treated poorly because

of his prior background and stated that the public defender in his case explicitly told

him that he was not going to try to help him "win" his case.

> Rob: I wish I would have had one of them [recording devices] because then I would've probably would've been more of an activist because I would actually have actual footage, but I mean [the public defender] literally told me "we're not here to get you off". That's just how the system works. I mean they told me this blatantly to my face, but then they'll deny if I ever say this in front of somebody.
>
> Interviewer: Right. On paper and in front of the right people it's one story.
>
> Rob: Yeah. I'm a criminal so I'm lying and trying to give them a bad rep, but yeah I mean they'll tell you because when you're in the confines of where they're at, what are you going to do? Nothing and nobody is ever had the, I guess, technology to actually record…it would be a whole investigation into the whole system.

It was clear that for people advocating for increased video documentation of both law

enforcement and courtroom proceedings this "evidence" could be used to help

demonstrate the ways in which individuals with criminal backgrounds are stigmatized

and treated by criminal justice actors. In addition, documentation of these interactions

could provide proof that those with criminal backgrounds can be honest, law-abiding,

and trusted by both law enforcement and the general public. Video recording of these

encounters was seen as both a tool for promoting justice as well challenging stigma.

This finding is particularly interesting considering the negative attitudes that were

previously discussed regarding perceptions of post-release supervision and police

surveillance and how individuals felt they were being overly-controlled or monitored

by the criminal justice system. However, when surveillance is also applied to those in

positions of power in the criminal justice system, returning citizens may be more

inclined to believe these practices are fair because they are no longer they only group

subjected to this level of scrutiny and even those in power can be made accountable for their behavior. If this is the case, then surveillance of law enforcement can be seen as a way for returning citizens to gain power and credibility within these interactions.

"I was expecting something way worse": Interactions with Probation Officers

During the interviews, returning citizens were asked about their relationship with their current probation officer and whether the relationship differed from expectations they had prior to their release from prison. Overwhelmingly, people shared that they had positive relationships with their probation officer and that they felt that their PO was a source of support and wanted them to be successful.[17] In addition, those same people who reported such positive, supportive relationships almost always shared that they had expected negative, conflict-filled relationships with their POs instead.

> A very fire-headed dude, one that's just out to get you. 'Cause usually that's what they are, they're just out to get you. It's actually the perception we get without even knowing them. Because you think for the worst, no, you prepare for the worst, hope for the best. (Rico)

Like Rico, many people were expecting their probation officer to be strict, ready to "throw the book" as many people stated for any slip up or infraction related to their probation requirements. When asked why they were expecting such a difficult or negative relationship with their PO, people formed their perception about this

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[17] It should be noted that all but two of the interviews took place within probation departments and therefore the positive experiences expressed by people during the interview could in part be due to the environment. This potential limitation is discussed more fully in chapter 7.

relationship based on either their prior experiences while on probation, or through the

information they gained from speaking with other individuals who were incarcerated.

> Sincere: I was expecting something way worse. Yeah, I was expecting my probation officer to just be so mean.
>
> Interviewer: What made you think that?
>
> Sincere: I don't know. People gave off this stereotype that all probation officers are just the worst people ever.

Chris provides an even more dramatic account of this kind of anticipation regarding

the character and behavior of their probation officer:

> Interviewer: Did you have any expectations while you were still locked up about what probation was going to be like?
>
> Chris: Yeah because I already had a full speech to give to my new probation officer. I was like "look when it comes down to you doing your job, are you going to do this? What are you going to do in these different situations?" and I was practicing the whole speech while I was locked up, that way I don't get violated for no reason or at least if I'm going to get violated I wouldn't admit to something I did, I had it all prepared.
>
> Interviewer: Are you still going to give that speech?
>
> Chris: Well I don't know yet. I've got to meet him first.

Chris's preparations indicate that he was expecting a relationship with his probation

officer that would require him to defend himself or anticipate conflicts. Other people

shared this expectation that their probation officer was going to be someone who was

essentially looking for a reason to send them back to prison rather than a source of

support. JB expresses a similar skepticism that probation really isn't about trying to

help individuals succeed, but about looking for a reason to send people back to prison.

I've been on probation before and I always thought and known probation is pretty much a set up for failure. They do their job because they have to do their job but once you step once out of line they're right there to say, you know what? You're going to jail.

JB has only been released for a few weeks and is still approaching his relationship with his PO with caution and does not believe that his officer will become a source of support for him as he continues through his reentry process.

For many people, this fear of a strict, or unsupportive PO resulted approaching their first meetings with their officer with a sense of guardedness and distrust. When asked about why they thought their officer would be trying to set them up for failure or not support them if they needed assistance, people discussed how they felt their prior behavior or current conviction may cause the officer to think badly about them.

> …I've been doing this for so long, like a lot of the POs know me, like man, I really hope it's not a PO that knows me because my reputation is just not all that great and they're just going to judge me from the beginning um, but I've been honest, like me and my PO been-I've been open with him… so that makes it a lot different. Like everything is just so different like um, I call [my probation officer] and I'm like, "are you busy, can I talk to you for a minute?" (Marie)

People who had been convicted of sex offenses generally were more like to be anxious about how their probation officer was going to treat them and admitted that they felt that they would be treated worse or more harshly because of their sex offense compared to other people who had drug offenses or other types of offenses.

> Einstein: She seems like she cares. I mean, it could be just a big elaborate act kind of thing. That could be, because I'm gullible…
>
> Interviewer: It's been a long time. It's been a year though. I don't think it is an act.
>
> Einstein: I like her though. I guess she likes me.

These stories all suggest that people approached their initial interactions with their probation officers with caution largely because of the stigma that they anticipated their officer would have towards them as a result of their criminal history or offense, or through the stories that were shared by other incarcerated individuals about probation officer behavior and attitudes. It could be argued that those who based their perception of the relationship that they would have with their PO off of the stories told by others, may have been forming their opinions based off of stereotypes of probation officers that result from stigmatization and devaluation of individuals who work in law enforcement. People who used language such as "all probation offers act like" or "all probation officers think this way" may be engaging in their own stigmatization of probation officers as people who are in this profession because they behave or think in a particular, negatively valued, way.

Changes in Legal Consciousness and its Relationship with Stigma and Social Bonds

It is important to mention that almost all of the people in this study reported that they had experienced a transformation in how they thought about the law or the role of police and probation officers in their lives. The ways in which returning citizens thought about and experienced the law in their lives, namely the criminal justice system, was often expressed as "back when I was a criminal" contrasted with stories and experiences since they've been released from their most recent incarceration. Prior to their incarceration, people largely described a legal consciousness that was generally "against the law". Police and probation officers were often viewed as enemies to be avoided or challenged if confronted. The court system

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and criminal laws were largely viewed as corrupt and unfair, or a system of rules that they simply did not care for or want to abide by. Those people who had been locked up multiple times described how they felt this mindset of being "against" the police and the rules and restrictions placed on them as part of their release is what ultimately led to their re-incarceration.

> When I got locked up and got sentenced, I realized that I was being a problem. Instead of blaming other people, I start blaming on myself. Instead of blaming the judges and officers, I need to come back and start working on how to be a better person and stop doing what you're not supposed to be doing. (Alvin)

Since their release, people discussed a motivation to live a conventional life and to abide by the laws of conventional society, but some voiced anxiety on whether they could adapt to this new lifestyle and the rules and laws that govern that lifestyle.

> I'm just trying to fit back in, I want to be normal. I don't know what normal is, normal to me was getting high. Normal was out robbing and just doing whatever. (Susan)
>
> *****
> It was scary. I've never been scared before when I came home. The first thing I'd be looking forward to is going to get some crack and getting' high. Really, going back out to the streets, prostitute and trickin' and all that stuff that I used to do. Now with this time, it was different. I decided I'm not going that road. I don't know anything else but trickin' and prostitution and smokin' crack, that's all I know. This is a whole new thing for me. I'm out of my element. (Dechelle)

This fear or uncertainty of not know how to live a "normal" or conventional life has been documented in other reentry research that examined the experiences of returning citizens and found that people often struggled with time management, paying bills on time, and self-discipline (Nelson, Dees, Allen, 1999). People voiced that they felt overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them by probation, the challenges they

anticipated in finding employment and acceptance in their community, and the worry

of how they would be treated because of their criminal background.

> It is good to have your freedom again. But it's also bad when you come out to a society that doesn't want you. Instead of just throwing people out on the street and saying, "Here you go, fend for yourself," why not take some of the funding, get him set up and at least get him a hotel voucher for a month so they have time to collect themselves and get started back up in that cycle again, instead of saying, "Here you go," and then having people slam their doors in your face and then they want to know why people commit crimes just to go back. (David)

David was not the only person that brought up the discouraging view that some

individuals may deliberately violate their probation in order to be re-incarcerated.

> It puts a roof over their head. Food, employment, you have a chance to make money in there. You have the classes, you've established friendships in there… (Cookie)

<div align="center">*****</div>

> You have to be mentally capable of knowing what you want to do and how you want to do it and how are you going to do it. In jail they have this, it's comfortable in jail, they'll give you three hots and a cot, I mean like it's easy. They do everything for you and when you get out of jail you see that you have to do everything for yourself, but when you're in jail and it's comfortable, you don't worry about anything because they provide everything for you. (Sincere)

<div align="center">*****</div>

> I felt like I'm safer in prison. You know what I mean? Even though I hated being there, but I just felt safer. (John)

As suggested by Cookie, Sincere, and John, that structure was preferred over the

unknown of adapting to a conventional lifestyle that they knew nothing about. For

individuals voicing these concerns, the criminal justice system that they were

embedded in had ceased being an enemy and had become something they were

dependent upon. Research on the institutionalization of incarcerated people have

found that people, especially those serving longer periods of incarceration, slowly

adapt to the structure of prison and that this structure becomes normative to them (Haney, 2003).

In regards to post-release supervision, some people discussed how they felt trapped or disempowered from the way they now had to interact with the law in their lives. They described the "hoop jumping" that they needed to go through in order to meet basic goals, where previously in their lives, their behavior was not constrained by such legal restrictions. Requesting permission from their probation officer or a judge to change residence, visit family, or stay out past curfew diminished the amount of independence people were accustomed to having prior their incarceration. In addition, people voiced their frustration at the time and effort it took to do things in a legitimate way, such as seeking out social services to help provide for themselves and their children.

> I mean the biggest difficulty that I was not anticipating was laying on that cot, I had it mapped out in my head step A, B, C, and I anticipated going forward and getting it. The biggest upset would have been, not achieving it as fast as I wanted it to. (Andrew)

Similarly, Rob stated, you "still feel confined in a certain way because of the limitations you might have once you get out of jail." Although no longer incarcerated, navigating the rules and laws of conventional society felt like another set of restrictions and limitations on individuals' behavior.

> … damn, I'm hungry, I have no money. It's a messy situation I'm in right now, but my grandma would say to me, "the rough things in life, build your character into the man that you're going to be". (Lucky)

People reflected on these hardships they have encountered trying to adapt to conventional society and live a law-abiding life and discussed the importance of

giving people hope and opportunities to be accepted rather than stigmatized. For many

individuals, reentry isn't exactly the correct phrase, because these individuals never

"entered" conventional society in the first place (Schram, 2013). Many have lived a

life of criminal behavior and viewed the law and the actors within it with distrust and

animosity. Now, they are attempting to join a society that is governed by rules and

restrictions that they have not followed in the past.

> It's an emptiness that needs to be filled. Some people need help to get on their
> feet because they want to be on their feet and then you got the ones that don't
> give a shit either way. I don't even want to say this but maybe they should be
> helped a little bit too. (Einstein)

The stories of feeling overwhelmed or anxious about leading a law-abiding

lifestyle demonstrate the importance in recognizing the changes in legal consciousness

from before incarceration to after. People are often coming from a vastly different way

of thinking about and experiencing the law in their lives (i.e. avoiding law

enforcement, no prior criminal justice involvement, etc.) and now trying to adapt to

new set of societal rules and expectations, in addition to the legal requirements and

restrictions that are placed on them as a result of their post-release supervision.

> There's a good portion of young men and women that are dealin' with a long,
> long incarceration to the point where they become so institutionalized that it
> becomes traumatic to be in regular society. And there needs to be some form of
> outlet, especially for the young individuals that are incarcerated that don't have
> avenues to express theyselves or learn more, be productive. Like, they, it's not
> enough school, there's not enough counselin', and the actual individual
> counselin', like actually dealin' with a person that wants it, like there are
> people who really want…And there's a lot of people that are plannin' on
> comin' home and really, really tryin' that just need an opportunity, just need an
> opportunity. (Eli)

This evolution in how people are attempting to work within this system of laws can

have a dramatic influence in their ability to form social bonds and combat the

experiences of stigma they may encounter as a result of their criminal background.

Some may feel the law as an oppressive force or something to be feared, stifling their willingness to form social bonds. Others may feel stigmatized by the law due to surveillance practices and post-release supervision requirements. Still others may now see the law as a source of support or safety in their lives, a dramatic shift from their pasts when police were seen as dangerous or treated with distrust.

Conclusion

This chapter identified and discussed the ways that the theoretical concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness may relate to one another and shape the reentry process for individuals recently released from prison. There is evidence from the experiences returning citizens provided that social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness do not operate discreetly or in isolation to one another, but interact in a variety of ways, resulting in numerous influences on how individuals are experiencing their reentry process. It is also important to note that these inter-relationships are dynamic and constantly changing and adapting. For example, as an individual encounters future stigmatizing experiences from law enforcement or other criminal justice actors, their legal consciousness is also likely to shift in how they perceive the law and choose to interact with legal actors. While not exactly a "cause and effect" type of relationship, the changes in social bonds, stigma, or legal consciousness can be thought of perhaps more as a ripple effect, touching and altering each of the other concepts and subtly change the day-to-day lived experience of reentry.

As individuals' experiences with social bonds, stigma and legal consciousness shape their reentry process, there are unique demographic and personal characteristics that also influence how an individual navigates reentry as well as the formation of social bonds, experiences of stigma, and their legal consciousness. The next chapter

will discuss trends found regarding the roles of race, gender, and geography in people's reentry experiences.

Chapter 6

REENTRY EXPERIENCES SHAPED BY GENDER, RACE, AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Introduction

While the primary focus of this research is the role of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness on the reentry process, people's experiences with reentry were also shaped by their race, gender, and geographic location within the state of Delaware. People often reported first-hand encounters in which they believed their gender, race, or geographic location played an important role in their unique reentry experiences, or conveyed that they perceived such demographic factors as having an influence on how individuals are treated or perceived when they are released from prison. Although statistical comparisons between particular demographic groups is not appropriate given the small group sizes, this chapter will discuss identified themes in which race, gender, or geography appeared to play a role in individuals' reentry experiences.

Race and Reentry

Race and social bonds

While reporting these particular trends found in people's experiences, it is important to note that I cannot determine whether race explains the differences between white and minority returning citizens. I can only report the trends that I found. In regards to the role of race in the ability to develop social bonds following release from prison, white individuals were more likely to share that they had positive social support and networks that helped them with housing, employment,

transportation, and other needs. To be clear, both white and minority returning citizens shared experiences of having social support to help them in their reentry process, and both whites and minorities described the hardships of not having those supports present. However, black and Hispanic individuals were more likely to describe their reentry process as "going solo" or having to seek out and obtain resources and meet their needs without the assistance of family members or friends. They often used the term "starting over" to describe their reentry process, feeling that they were being released back into society with nothing and having to start from scratch in meeting their needs.

> Reentry is good but to me it's starting over because I lost everything. When I got out of jail I had two bags and nothing but paperwork and information that I have accumulated through the years and then after like a few months at the work lease I had two more bags of clothes. So right now I got two big trash bags full of clothes. When I came home I didn't have any of that …hopefully a few more months I have a place to live. (Phil)

White people were more likely to share that they were staying with family members until they could afford housing on their own or that they were able to get a job at their former employer. These differences in bonds and supports that were available upon release for white and minority returning citizens could be a result of the availability of resources and opportunities to form bonds with conventional society prior to their incarceration, which could be influenced by race, but further analysis of this particular difference between people is beyond the information that was solicited for this project.

Race, Stigma & Legal Consciousness

> The way I feel about the justice system is been embedded in my DNA through generations, you gotta understand I'm a black man, so like, the way you view a

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police officer, the way you view the judge, the way you view a lawyer,
anybody that's holdin' a badge, immediately is not going to be the same. (Eli)

Twenty-two returning citizens identified as non-white, with 19 of those
individuals identifying as black. Race was discussed by numerous minority
individuals as having an impact on their reentry process, particularly ways relating to
legal consciousness and stigma. These individuals felt that their race played a role in
perceptions of and interactions with the criminal justice system, access to job
opportunities and resources, and how they are viewed and treated by society well
before they were incarcerated. People described living in "ghettos" and the lifestyle
that they grew up with and became accustomed to. These stories often echoed the
views shared in Anderson's "Code of the Streets" (1990), particularly in regards to
earning respect and credibility in their communities and to perceptions of the police.
The people who lived by this code often expressed that engaging in criminal behavior,
particularly selling drugs and gang activity, was considered normal part of life and that
prior to their more recent release from prison they had never experienced any other
way of living.

> I believe so and if I didn't, if I wasn't in the street so much. I was in the streets
> I was at home because I was just in the streets. Just running the streets like it
> was an adventure goin' on every day, I'm just going to do different things. I
> think I blew that up, I blew those chances knowing that. (E-man)

E-man got involved in the street life at an early age and by doing so, he felt that
conventional society was not really an option that was available to him.

It was evident from the interviews and experiences shared by people that those
who identified as white did not experience the same stigmatization as a result of their
race: none of the white returning citizens shared a story that indicated differential

treatment by police (or anyone else) as a result of their race. Additionally, white people reported less fear, distrust, or animosity towards police prior to their incarceration and far fewer negative encounters with police officers prior to their incarceration as well. Twelve black individuals shared stories about negative encounters with law enforcement compared to only six white individuals. It should be noted that the fewer negative encounters is not necessarily a result of less criminal behavior. Some white returning citizens were also engaging in criminal activity prior to their most recent incarceration, but white individuals in general did report less criminal activity prior to their most recent incarceration compared to those who identified as a minority. Therefore, the result of greater negative encounters with police could be a result of minority people's experiences living within communities that had greater pressures to engage in criminal activity (and were likely more heavily patrolled by law enforcement) compared to white people. However, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn as these comparisons are beyond the scope of the current project.

Black returning citizens also shared a distrust of the courts and often expressed skepticism that the criminal justice system and court procedures promoted "justice", not so much because they felt that their criminal record would be used to stigmatize them, but because they felt their race would be used against them.

> Because they think that all black people sell and do drugs. I don't sell drugs. I don't do drugs. I don't drink alcohol. So, one of my fears is one of these racist state or local police might plant some drugs in my vehicle, and then that would be violation of probation, police contact and I'll be back in prison… Delaware- there's no black judges. There's no black prosecutors. Everyone is white and they're runnin' the system. (John)

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John's perception of police officers and court actors as racist was shared by several other people as well, but they differed on how they attributed these perceived racist attitudes. Some people attributed what they perceived as racist criminal justice actors' behavior to the individual's beliefs and attitudes, while others would speak more broadly about Delaware being a historically "racist state" or referred to Delaware's past as a slave-owning state prior to the Civil War.

> Delaware was a slave state. It's not just against black people, but if you were the minority you are discriminated against, let along, they still got the whipping stock in Georgetown right around at the courthouse. (Chris)

For these individuals, Delaware's system of criminal justice (or the Criminal "Injustice" System as quite a few minority individuals referred to it as) is deeply embedded in a history of racism and slavery that they feel continues to influence the way black individuals, particularly men, are perceived and treated by police, prosecutors, public defenders, and judges. This distrust of the criminal justice system and the anticipation of stigma and discrimination impacted the way minority returning citizens thought about and interacted with criminal justice actors.

Gender and reentry

> I think they're tougher on women than men. I've noticed that in jail like the sentencing….I think society thinks that women shouldn't hurt their children. I hear in passing how people talk about some of the women that's in the [homeless shelter] but you have 10 to 1 men that's in the same predicament and may not look as good as this woman is looking, but you're fixed on her because, why? Because she's a woman. (Kisha)

While I was only able to recruit ten women to participate in my research some trends that did emerge among the eleven women that I interviewed that indicated that there may be some differences between the experiences of men and women.

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Generally, the gender differences that emerged were around the themes of: 1) victimization, 2) parenting, and 3) emotional responses to reentry. I will discuss each of these themes in greater detail.

<div align="center">Gender and Victimization</div>

Two women shared stories of sexual victimization and another woman reported that she was physically assaulted since their release from prison. In both sexual assault cases, the women were assaulted by male roommates in a home that they were temporarily living in during the first few weeks of their release from prison. All three women reported these incidents to police, and all three reported that they did not feel that their incidents were taken seriously by the police.   One women was even charged for destruction of property because she broke a necklace worn by her attacker as she tried to fight him off.

> This man tried to rape me and I beat him up. I need to take anger
> management? Are you crazy? Really, are you sick? I ain't cool with that. I
> told them the story with that… I bought him a $5 cross at a sale and he told
> them, it cost $50. When I beat him up, I accidentally grabbed it and broke it.
> He told them it cost $50. That's where the criminal mischief comes from. For
> breaking property that I bought for $5. Then, he told them it cost $50.
> (Dechelle)

Similarly, Anastacia was sexually assaulted, but stated that the police told her they could not make an arrest because there was not enough evidence.

> I was staying at somebody's house and I was just asleep and he woke me up by
> (indicates man put his finger in her). [I called] the police, yup. And they said
> they couldn't arrest him because they didn't have enough evidence.
> (Anastacia)

Cassie, who was physically attacked by an unknown assailant, stated that she felt the police did not take her seriously because she was both a woman and homeless

and was then fearful for calling the police because she had become a "snitch" and was

worried her attacker would find out and attack her again.

> Cassie: Last week I did go to the police, which I called them and told them. Because I went to the [transit center] because I was homeless so I was like, just stayin' at the [transit center] for like two nights until I could get into a shelter, and this guy grabbed me and starts hittin' me. Like, who the hell do you think you are?
>
> Interviewer: You have no idea who this person, just totally random?
>
> Cassie: And I told the cops, they said, well you know we're glad you called and I'm like you should be. God forbid, but what if he shoots me? And he tells me "don't walk in the dark".
>
> Interviewer: The police weren't very helpful?
>
> Cassie: Yeah, but I'm thankful they did come, I seen the cop ride around there. I told him exactly what he's wearing, he smelled like alcohol and he's a coke addict. I snitched. What if comes back and hurts me?
>
> Interviewer: Did you feel like the police didn't treat you as seriously as they should have?
>
> Cassie: See, this is what I think, if I was in Wilmington, they would took me where I had to go. I think Dover, I think it all depends. Mostly people they take us less serious, especially with the girls and the domestic violence stuff.

I did not ask people directly about experiences of victimization following their release

from prison, and even if I had, there would likely be people who chose not to disclose

such information to me. However, three of ten women that were interviewed shared

experiences of victimization, two of whom were sexually victimized, compared to

only one male participant who had property stolen from him. These findings suggest

that women, at least the women who participated in this study, experience a greater

risk for victimization following their release from prison.

"I am their mom, have been their mom through this whole thing": Gender and Parenting

Another theme that emerged that differentiated men and women was their role as primary caregivers of their children. Only one of the ten women that I interviewed reported that she did not have any children[18], compared with ten of the thirty-three men who I interviewed. Additionally, compared to men with children, women with children were more likely to express that they were the primary caregivers for their children prior to their incarceration and were also more likely to express the desire to once again become a primary caregiver to their children,.

> …we started doing heroin and then it got to the point where that was my focus, you know my kids were taken care of, Um, I made sure they had clothes, I made sure they had food, I made sure they had a house over their head. Now what I did to get that stuff I had to a lot of stealing, a lot of manipulating, but they were provided for so I could get high. (Sally)

Sally's story describes how even through the worst parts of her addiction to heroin she made sure her children had they things they needed such as food and clothing, which she admitted usually required theft or other illegal behavior to acquire. Her story echoes those shared in Shdaimah and Leon's (2014) work with women engaged in prostitution and the selective manipulation they used to meet goals or obtain resources. The choice to engage in deviant behavior or refrain from it was usually a calculated decision and based on factors such as financial need or the well-being of themselves or family members.

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[18] Although two women reported having children that were older than 18 years and therefore legal adults.

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> I was just happy, like to be with my kids, you asked what the most exciting thing was, like this is my first time from the beginning of the school year for my son, you know, me signing the papers and filling out things for him, it's 3rd grade, you know, it's been a lot of time I've missed. I was excited about that, like, just being a mom is what my biggest excitement was to be honest. (Marie)

Like Marie, there were several individuals, male and female, who discussed having children but not being a caregiver or "parent" to them prior to their most recent incarceration. In these situations where the parent had previously not had an active role in their child's lives, women were more likely to discuss a desire to take on that parenting role for the first time[19].

> I had eight kids but I didn't take care of them. I put them with my family and their father's family. When I had them, they're gone, just like that. I don't have any responsibility whatsoever for any of them, not one and that's one of my regrets. But we've all got together one time, like 10 years ago, the whole family reunion thing….I don't have a parenting style because I was not a parent. I was a mother that had children, that's it. I was not a mommy or daddy or anything. But now seeing my grandkids, I guess something's clicking, kicking but I don't know what it is. I still can't and I feel bad for it, feel attachment, commitment like they are mine. I don't feel like they're mine yet. I still don't. You know how you have a relation, your mom, your daughter, your grandkids, and I don't have that connection because I don't know. I can't even say why. I love them, I think I love them, I'm not sure. (Dechelle)

Dechelle had never taken on the role of a mother to her children and is now struggling to understand and process the feelings she has towards her grandchildren, whom she wants to be an active part of their lives. The emotional connection to her grandchildren feels foreign to her and she even recalls a story later where one of her younger grandchildren kept calling for her in a store ("mom mom"), but she never turned

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[19] I never explicitly asked returning citizens about parenthood, therefore, these conversations about the role individuals had or wanted to have in their children's lives were unsolicited stories about the importance of parenting to these individuals.

around because she wasn't used to be called that. Without suggesting that men with children did not want to be an active parent in their children's lives, it must be noted that the theme of wanting to be a "better parent" to their children was more salient among the women who had children compared to the men who had children. This is consistent with other work that has found a central theme in women's desistance narrative about the role their children have in motivating them to desist from crime or to meet certain goals during their reentry (Leverentz, 2014; Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002)

Twenty-three of the men I interviewed had at least one child (17 had at least one child under the age of 18), but most of the fathers I spoke with had not been primary caregivers of their children prior to their incarceration. Men who did have children and wanted to play a more active role in their children's lives were more likely than their female counterparts to discuss issues with child custody and having the ability to visit with their children.

> Her mom pick and choose moments-can't really fight her now. I'm not in the
> right position, so I'll take my moments when I get them. (Andrew)

Like Andrew, several of the fathers I spoke with expressed similar sentiments to regarding their current social position and ability to fight for custody or visitation rights for their child, indicating that they would like to have a more primary role in their children's lives now that they are released. This is similar to what other research has found regarding the desire of incarcerated men to become more involved in their children's lives than they were prior to their incarceration (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005).

In contrast, there were also a couple of fathers that stated that while they may want to fully reconnect with their children, they were making a deliberate choice not to immediately get back involved in their children's lives until they had reached a certain level of stability or goal achievement in their own lives.

> How long is going to take for me to be able to provide a home…I still see him few days out of the week and we're still pretty close, but it makes me feel like I should be there to raise him every day, be there to give him breakfast and see him to get home from school and help when he's acting up, not to able to discipline to where you can teach him, this isn't the right way. (Randolph)

Randolph had been a primary caregiver to his son prior to his incarceration and while he wants to take on the role of a full-time parent again, he is waiting until he has a stable residence where his child could stay with him. These fathers want to make sure they have other responsibilities taken care of (i.e. stable employment, stable housing, paying off fines, getting their driver's license, etc.) before taking a more active role in their child's life or utilizing the courts to gain parental or visitation rights.

> I'm not going to contact them until-I guess I could have since I've been out, but I'm not going to contact them if I don't know that I'm going to be around. It wouldn't be fair. Call them, "Hey, kids. Your dad is out of jail but still might not never see you again. Love you. Bye.'' (Einstein)

Finally, while all of the women that I spoke with who have children discussed playing an active role in their children's lives (or want to do so), there were five fathers who reported that they have children, but were not an active part of their children's lives. These men were more likely to discuss the challenges of making child support payments when having little or no income and their fear that they would violate their conditions of supervision because they may default on these payments.

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Being able to support myself trying to find housing and then trying to find work and then also trying to do all things that I am supposed to do as far as probation, fines, child support, stuff like that. [It's] a little overwhelming at first. (Rob)

For these parents, the responsibility of supporting a child can result in possible re-incarceration and is perceived by some as a source of stress or a barrier to overcome rather than a commitment to their children.

It is evident from the stories shared by parents that men and women recently released from prison may have different goals in regards to parenthood and the role that they would like to have in their children's lives. In general, women were more likely to serve as primary caregivers to their children before their incarceration and were more likely to voice a desire to play an active role in their children's lives compared to men with children. Fathers were more likely to identify challenges with seeing their children and more likely to discuss child support payments as a financial burden that they feared could send them back to prison.

"I cried the whole first month": Emotional Responses to Reentry

Lastly, a fairly distinct gender difference emerged in how men and women identified and discussed the emotions that they experienced following their release from prison. Both men and women voiced fear, anger, optimism, hope, hopelessness, shame, disappointment, frustration, excitement, and many other emotional reactions to the experiences they've had since released from prison. Several people stated that they felt they were on an "emotional roller coaster" during the first few days and weeks following their release from prison. However, men were more likely to state that they were nervous about what challenges they may face in their reentry process as well as more likely to express frustration and disappointment regarding the reentry process and obstacles they encountered compared to women.

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It's difficult because I've got [to] lower my expectations because of my record and stuff like that. I got theft on my record…It's frustrating but I guess that's the situation for myself. I'll be all right with it and I'll get past this. (Terry)

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I had been incarcerated so long, my family member is telling me that it's different, cellular phones are different, streets. I was nervous when they let me out the first day to go job seeking…and scared that society will send me back, people, like they know me and stuff like that. (Alvin)

In contrast, women were more likely to share that they felt overwhelmed, fearful, and even suicidal following their release. Women shared that they often cried the day they were released and for several days or weeks afterwards, and were also the only individuals to become tearful during the interview.

I was overwhelmed in the beginning. I cried the whole first month. It was a lot, trying to be out here. (Cookie)

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The particular day [the I-ADAPT Coordinator] met me, I was very overwhelmed. I was scared. I think I went up to him. It was after the presentation and I had a few questions for him and burst out crying which I'm usually not-but I was scared… I couldn't even go to grocery store. I was just overwhelmed. I didn't know what to get first. (Margaret)

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I was scared that all I've learned and the feelings that I was having there, would change as soon as I hit those doors. I was scared to walk out those doors because I didn't want that for family and I didn't want that for my life. (Kisha)

This is not to say that men were not also fearful, depressed, or perhaps even suicidal, but in terms of the language they used to express the emotions they were experiencing, men rarely reported that they these particularly emotions since their release. Research on incarcerated women has found that compared to incarcerated men, women, and in particular black women, report a higher rate of mental health issues as well as less

access to treatment for mental health (Leon, Ralston, & Hickman, 2010; Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008; Glaze & James, 2006), suggesting it is possible that the women I spoke with were experiencing greater emotional and mental health issues than men. Women were much more forthcoming in expressing these particular types of emotions and those that did also discussed the importance of relying on family members, friends, or other sources of social support, or turning to their religious faith, to help them process and cope with these intense feelings.

> …That night on my first night out, I called [a friend] at 11 at night and we didn't get off the phone until 3 in the morning because I was so-like I'm scared, I'm home, I don't know what to do. And I was staying at a recovery house and um, it was just, it was overwhelming… (Sally)

Perhaps it was because of the types of emotions men chose to share during the interview, but they were far less likely to discuss the need to rely on others as a source of emotional support during the first days and weeks of their reentry process. This finding suggests that women may have a greater need for support persons and resources to help them process and cope with these particularly strong emotional states that lead some women to feeling suicidal, although men would likely benefit as well. A greater discussion of how findings from this project identify areas for improved programming and resources for those coming out of prison is found in the next chapter.

Geography and Reentry: Stigma, Resources and Transportation

Finally, geography played an important role in people' reentry experiences, specifically in regards to perceptions of stigma from the public, access to resources, and transportation challenges. Delaware is a unique state in that while it is quite small

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spatially, there are distinct differences between the Northern county of New Castle, and the Southern county, Sussex.

Figure 6.1. Map of Delaware and three counties.

New Castle County is located within the larger Delaware Valley Metropolitan Area which includes the cities of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Camden, New Jersey, and contains Wilmington, the most populous city in the state of Delaware. In contrast, Sussex County is a rural county with no major cities and sprawling farmland and crops, along with small beach communities near the coast (there is a third Delaware county, Kent, that is located between New Castle and Sussex that is a blend of both the urban and rural environments of the other two counties and contains the state capital of Dover). People who were released in Sussex County frequently commented on the different experiences and access to resources that they encountered compared to their Northern counterparts.

Geography and Perceptions of Stigma

I asked every person whether they felt the general public had a certain attitude towards individuals who have criminal records or who have been incarcerated to gain insight into individuals' more general perceptions of stigma. It became very clear in how people answered this question that they believe that where they lived played a meaningful role in how the general public thinks about and treats individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system.

> Down here at Sussex County yeah. Now up in Wilmington and New Castle just it seemed, it's [not as bad] because everybody seems like they've been there. (Susan)

Susan's beliefs about how the general public views people with a criminal record was shared by other individuals as well who also felt that people were more stigmatizing and negative towards people who have been incarcerated down in the rural, southern counties compared to urbanized, New Castle County. Like Susan, Eli and other people who lived in or were familiar with New Castle County believed that the higher crime-rates and number of individuals under correctional supervision in that county resulted in a greater level of tolerance and understanding towards individuals who had been incarcerated. The most common response was that in New Castle County, most people probably know someone that has been incarcerated or has had problems with drug abuse, and therefore they didn't evaluate these individuals in such a negative way and were more likely to recognize that their criminal behavior was only one aspect of an individual.

> I don't wanna say the majority, but a good portion who you meet, have been incarcerated, if not for a just a day, in some way shape or form, they've had some type of incarceration or level of probation. So, it's not really welcome, but it's more of an understanding here, because it's so congested as far as like-

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they understand it's a small area... everybody knows each other, especially in Wilmington, but whatever area you are in, so there's-there's some level of understanding and a lot of people really, they may be like okay, he did do something bad, but, they do remember like, while he was doing that, he helped me. (Eli)

Eli found that in New Castle County, and in Wilmington in particular, the density of that region results in less stigmatization because there is a greater chance that residents know someone who has been incarcerated. In contrast, many of the people that resided in Sussex County felt that the close-knit, small-town dynamic was resulting in *greater* stigmatization because of the belief that there was less crime overall and that "everybody knows everybody" and therefore information about individuals spreads more quickly in these small communities.

Why can't I have a permit to go every Friday or every Wednesday to Ocean City or into Maryland to look for a job where lesser people know me as the "bad person"? I don't have such a criminal record over there. I got one, but it's nothing like over here. I would have a better chance in Maryland... not everybody knows that I can't work in a store. Everybody right here knows me. (Susan)

People who shared the same opinion as Susan felt that these small, close-knit communities resulted in a greater risk of residents sharing negative or even false information about them, further diminishing their ability to find employment or be accepted in their community. These people also voiced a fear of having the police called on them if there was an incident or issue in the community because they may be one of the only individuals residents know that has committed a crime, and therefore will be the first person they blame for any future criminal activity. In particular, several people shared concerns that they were more likely to run into former acquaintances in these smaller communities which could lead to negative interactions, relapse into drug abuse, or their probation officer feeling that they are engaging in

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inappropriate contact with other individuals with criminal records. For these people, their small-community felt like a trap. Multiple people expressed a desire to relocate to a different county or different state so that they could "start fresh" and not have people already perceiving them as someone who is untrustworthy or dangerous.

While some people felt similarly to Susan, that the small-town dynamic created opportunity for greater stigmatization because everyone may know about a person's criminal past, others felt that there was an advantage to living in a community where residents may know who they are and recognize that a criminal background may not mean they are necessarily a bad person or someone to be avoided.

> I've noticed that it's different in the communities, it's different in environments that you go around. You might go one neighborhood where there's people that have been through all that mess and the people are so close in the community and they still know who they are as a person. Then, you go somewhere where there might be a community of retired people from all over the place and I hear it. I've seen everything. "I'll stay away from this guy, I'm going to close my curtain, double lock my doors". (Randolph)

Similar to Randolph, there were several people who were thankful to return to their close-knit communities because they felt that they received greater acceptance and understanding than they would have experienced in a new community because residents had known them throughout their entire lives and know them as a person, not just simply as a criminal. These people often discussed how their prior connections to their community (employment, religious groups, circle of family or friends) helped to prevent stigmatizing experiences because they were able to re-establish these connections following their release from prison and therefore already had a positive support network in place versus beginning life as a stranger in a new community.

Finally, one person discussed how he felt that the entire community that someone resides in could be stigmatized and therefore under greater scrutiny from law enforcement. In particular, this person felt that residents of urban areas in New Castle County were unfairly assumed to be involved in drug-related crime, simply because of the neighborhood they were from.

> How the area has been depicted and what goes on in the neighborhood, because now, you got drug dealers over here. He may be a drug dealer, and they see what a nice little watch or anything to that extent, you pull out a little bit of money and give it to somebody on the street, they think you're a drug dealer. It's just perception for misunderstanding. (Rico)

Rico feared that just by residing in an urban neighborhood in New Castle County that he would be suspected of engaging in criminal activity and was concerned about having police contact which could result in a violation of his probation. While other people did not explicitly express similar concerns, other people who resided in New Castle County discussed frequently seeing law enforcement in their neighborhoods and shared the same view that neighborhoods in Wilmington in particular were viewed as crime-ridden and dangerous. Wilmington Delaware does indeed have a high level of violent and drug-related crime compared to other similar-sized cities across the United States and therefore it is not surprising that Rico, and perhaps others, feel that residing in such an environment may result in themselves and other residents being stigmatized following their release from prison. The hyper-policing and surveillance of inner-city neighborhoods and its impact on residents' perceptions of being targeted or scrutinized by law enforcement was discussed in Goffman's (2009) research in Philadelphia as well as Victor Rio's research of inner-city, black and Hispanic youth in California (2011). For young men in these communities, the law, particularly

police, may feel omnipresent, always watching, and waiting for them to make a mistake.

<center>Geography and Access to Resources</center>

Geography also influenced the types and accessibility of resources and services for people coming out of prison, which is not particularly surprising given prior research findings that residents of rural communities have access to fewer resources, including social services and assistance programs (Garland, Wodahl, & Mayfield, 2010; Ward & Merlo, 2015). Similarly, returning citizens who lived in Kent and Sussex Counties (the southern counties) perceived a lack of resources and services available to them compared to New Castle County. This included access to half-way houses and shelters, substance abuse treatment programs, and social services. While some people stated that they felt that these resources simply didn't exist to the same extent in the southern counties compared to New Castle, others felt that it had more to do with networking and information sharing that was lacking in the southern part of the state.

> I mean me personally I feel like it's worse down here like being up in New Castle and hearing the city girls talk, they all know about this place and that place and here and there. But here it's like "where do I go for this? What do I do for this"? And if you've never been through it, you're not gonna know. (Marie)

There were many other people who, like Marie, stated that they felt overwhelmed during the first few days of their release because they lacked information about where to access certain resources or where to go to start the process of obtaining employment, housing, social services, or identification documents.

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Others expressed frustration over what they perceived as a dearth of available reentry and substance-abuse treatment programs for individuals in the southern counties compared to what was available up north. When just looking at Department of Health and Human Services office locations, there are nine offices located within New Castle County, and nine additional offices that are then split between Kent and Sussex Counties (Delaware Health and Social Services, 2016). Additionally, there are 20 substance abuse treatment and mental health service providers that the DHSS contracts with: 9 are located in New Castle County, 3 in Kent County, and 9 in Sussex County (Delaware Health and Social Services, 2016). It should be noted though that Sussex County is over twice as large as New Castle County in terms of land mass. New Castle County also has unique programs focused on assisting individuals, primarily men, who are recently released from prison. In particular, New Castle County has a Reentry Court that provides intensive-supervision and improved access to resources and services for men who have been involved in the criminal justice system multiple times or who have been identified as a high risk to recidivate. There is also the Delaware Center for Justice, which provides a variety of resources for people coming out of prison. New Castle County also recently opened the Achievement Center, a resource center for men coming out of prison that provides help with securing employment, housing, and mental health care, among other services. These programs are located in Wilmington, Delaware and there are no similar programs available in Kent and Sussex County. However, the I-ADAPT program, which has been described in previous chapters, is a state-wide program and most of the people were a part of this program which does provide referrals and information on how to obtain resources and services. Despite this, people from the southern counties were

still more likely to state that they felt there were a lack of resources available to them compared to the services offered in New Castle County.

<div align="center">"It affects everything": Geography and Transportation</div>

Related to the issue of services and resources available in the southern counties of Delaware, people who resided in these counties frequently expressed that even with the programs and services that are available, transportation challenges made access to these services difficult and frustrating. While there is bus service available in each of the three countries in Delaware, the routes and schedules were far superior in New Castle County compared to Kent and Sussex Counties. In addition, limited public transportation in the southern counties resulted in people having significant difficulties making it to probation check-in appointments and places of employment. People often did not have a valid driver's license upon their release from prison, and depending on their offense, financial situation, and post-release requirements, may not be able to obtain a license for an extended period of time. Therefore, people must rely on public transportation, rides from other individuals, or they must bike or walk to their appointments and jobs. In Sussex County in particular, residential areas, social service facilities, places of employment, and probation may be separated by several miles or more. This can make scheduling appointments and even applying for jobs a significant burden. Furthermore, the limited bus system that exists in Sussex County is still inaccessible to some people who are unemployed or have extremely limited financial resources. People reported that fares are $1.75 one-way, which, depending on the number of appointments or an individual's work schedule that can add up to a significant weekly expense for those recently released from prison who are trying to get re-established.

Interviewer: Are you going to get bus passes here at all, from your PO or anything?

David: I haven't been able to get any.

Interviewer: Have you been having to just walk everywhere? How do you get to your appointments here?

David: I have to walk. It took me about an hour and a half to get from the Delaware Interfaith Resource Center down to here.

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I took the bus down there twice, got up, 5:00 o'clock in the morning, left at 6:00. Got down there and filled in the application online, came all the way back, didn't get home till like 9:00 o'clock at night because the bus don't take you directly home. It takes you to the bus depot. (John)

As David and John's stories illustrate, having to walk to appointments or to fill out applications can take up an extraordinary amount of time, making it difficult to schedule multiple appointments on the same day or even fill out more than one or two applications in a day, which could result in it taking much longer for these individuals to secure employment. Other people shared having to walk miles to-and-from their place of employment or probation office, something that will become increasingly more problematic during the winter months (these interviews took place in late summer and early fall).

People also shared stories about how transportation issues in the southern counties limits their abilities to connect with family members. They expressed disappointment or frustration about not being able to visit their children as often as they liked or not being able to see family or friends who lived out of the immediate area. When people had to rely on others for rides to anywhere they needed to go, they often felt that they could only request rides to their jobs or probation since those were

the places that they needed to be versus places that they wanted to visit in their spare

time.

> It affects everything. Affects work opportunities as travel to get back and forth. It's something that the people in Sussex County need really, I would say… and a lot of girls from upstate, they don't want to come out and go right back to where they were so they choose to come downstate. Well they have no idea of what they're getting into down here. Legally I don't have to be at the [recovery house]. I have a home it's five miles out of town, it's literally five minutes from here. And the kids were there, I mean I could have moved back into the house, you know my home confinement box could have been set up there. Everything could have been set up there, it would have been wonderful to live with the kids, but I would had to rely on somebody to get me back here a lot. (Cookie)

Cookie describes making the choice to live away from her children because she was

anticipating how difficult it may be to attend her probation check-in appointments if

she was forced to rely on someone giving her a ride each time. Instead, she chose to

live at a recovery house where she could walk to the probation office. It was more

important to her to make her appointments with probation than live with her children

and risk a violation of her supervision requirements. Cookie's story along with others

shows that a lack of available and affordable public transportation, particularly in the

southern counties, can limit people's ability to develop important social bonds to their

community following release from prison. Limited transportation can lead to

challenges in seeking employment, visiting with family and other sources of positive

support, and accessing needed services, all of which could have a detrimental impact

on an individuals' reentry process (Naser & Visher, 2006; Salem, Nyamathi,

Idemundia, Slaughter, & Ames, 2013; Belanger & Stone, 2008; Ward, & Merlo,

2015).

Conclusion

This chapter examined how some of the individual characteristics of people shaped the reentry process, including race, gender, and where individuals were residing in the state following their release. Each of these characteristics was found to impact the ways in which some people were able to develop social bonds with their community, perceptions of stigma from the public, and how they viewed and interacted with the law, particularly the criminal justice system. Minorities expressed greater difficulty obtaining resources and were more likely to feel that they were "starting over" upon their release, versus whites who tended to have greater support systems and resources during those first few days and weeks following their release from prison. Additionally, blacks felt that race influenced the way criminal justice actors perceived and treated them, resulting in more negative views about the law and police. Women were more likely to share that they experienced intense emotional states during the first days and weeks of their reentry compared to men and were also more likely to share experiences of victimization since their release. Finally, people in the southern parts of the state expressed that they experienced greater challenges with obtaining resources and services, partly due to decreased availability of such resources in the southern counties, but also because transportation made accessing services difficult. Transportation also resulted in challenges seeking and maintaining employment as well as visiting with family and friends who were a source of positive support. The final chapter will discuss how findings from this project have contributed to what is known about the reentry experience and the role of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness on that process.

Chapter 7

LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

The current project examined the role of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness on the experiences of men and women recently released from prison. The study used a grounded theory approach, opting for three broad research questions instead of specific hypotheses or areas of examination:

> RQ1: What are individuals' experiences with social bond formation, stigma, and the law following their release from incarceration?

> RQ2: How do the concepts of social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness relate to each other and influence individuals' reentry experiences?

> RQ3: How do factors such as gender, race, and geographic location influence the reentry process?

Interviews with 43 men and women across the state of Delaware provided information regarding the influence of bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness on people's reentry experiences, the inter-relationships between theoretical concepts, as well as the unique impacts of race, gender, and geographic location on the reentry process. While numerous, interesting relationships emerged between theoretical concepts, as well as between the concepts and the reentry process, I will briefly highlight here the key findings related to each of the three research questions above. Next I will discuss the limitations of the current research, followed by its contributions to the field and areas for future research. I will conclude with a discussion of potential policy implications and closing thoughts.

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Summary of Key Findings

RQ1: Bonds, Stigma, and Legal Consciousness on Reentry Process

Through the stories that were shared with me, I found that social bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness each had a role in the reentry experiences of returning citizens. Some of these findings were unsurprising given evidence provided in the existing reentry literature, such as the importance of employment and positive social support in aiding people's successful return to their communities. In addition to these social bonds, I also found evidence of each of Hirschi's (1969) four types of social bonds: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Community involvement through participation in athletic, or religious activities, as well as support groups was reported to help people feel accepted and connected to their communities. Additionally, religious beliefs were found in some individuals to provide a behavioral or moral compass that helped people follow the rules and expectations of conventional society and refrain from engaging in deviant or criminal behavior. In regards to stigma, it was unsurprising based on existing literature that men and women experienced stigma and rejection from employers as well as perceived or experienced stigma from members of the general public.

A somewhat less expected finding from this project was the theme of "giving back" that was prevalent in people's stories about their reentry experiences. Multiple individuals spoke about their desire to become involved in charity work or participate in support programs or groups where they can share their story with others in hopes that youth, or even other adults, will use that information to avoid a life of crime or substance abuse. There is evidence from existing research that examines strengths-based approaches to reentry programming (Maruna & LeBel, 2003) as well as the

importance of "redemption" rituals and behaviors that help individuals shed their stigmatizing label as an "ex-offender" (Maruna, 2001). These studies indicate that helping others and "giving back" is a way to help empower returning citizens and allow them to celebrate and demonstrate their contributions to society.

There were some findings however, that were more surprising due to fewer references to such relationships and experiences in the existing reentry literature. First, the overwhelming majority of returning citizens reported that they felt their supervision officer was a source of positive support for them during their reentry process. There is evidence that the role of probation and parole has shifted over time with changes on the emphasis of surveillance versus supportive approaches to supervision practices. Additionally, Delaware's I-ADAPT reentry initiative may encourage supervision officers to adopt more supportive practices with their supervisees due to the objective of this initiative to provide greater resources and supports to men and women coming out of prison. There is also the potential for these positive sentiments to be a result of interviews being conducted almost exclusively within probation and parole offices, which could influence how individuals choose to speak about their supervision officers (this will be discussed in the following section on study limitations). Regardless, this is a finding that warrants additional exploration.

Another, less expected finding was the experience of stigma from former, deviant peers that three individuals shared they had experienced. We often think about stigma in regards to members of conventional society stigmatizing those who have been labeled as deviant. However, these three individuals were stigmatized for adopting a conventional, law-abiding lifestyle by their former peers who were still involved in crime. This stigmatization was not anticipated by these returning citizens

and is less documented in the existing literature, and deserves recognition as it presents a potential source of stigma returning citizens may encounter, but is not often discussed.

Finally, legal consciousness within this group of returning citizens was found to be primarily influenced by interactions with the criminal justice system versus other areas of law. This narrower conventionalization of legal consciousness (or "criminal justice consciousness") is supported by Sexton's (2015) examination of "penal consciousness" and Sarat's (1990) research with welfare recipients. Both assert that legal consciousness is shaped by individuals' direct, immediate experiences with the law, which for the groups they studied, may be almost exclusively through the correctional system or navigating the bureaucracy of social services. In regards to returning citizens, some of these individuals have been involved in the criminal justice system since childhood, or had parents or other family members and friends who were involved in crime or had been incarcerated, meaning that the "law" in these people's lives was always related to crime and punishment, or criminal justice. Additionally, returning citizens are released from prison and immediately embedded into a web of legal rules and expectations as part of their post-release supervision, often impacting many aspects of their lives such as housing, employment, community involvement, and social acceptance and support. It therefore seems appropriate that legal consciousness within this particular group is largely conceptualized as the way people think about, experience, and interact with the criminal justice system in their lives.

RQ2: Inter-relationships between Theoretical Concepts

Perhaps the most interesting findings from this project come out of the examination of the inter-relationships between the three theoretical concepts of social

bonds, stigma, and legal consciousness. The first being that approximately one quarter of returning citizens reported that they engaged in some degree of "preventative isolation" due to anticipation of stigmatization. These individuals felt that the stigma surrounding their criminal conviction would likely result in negative interactions with the general public, and therefore chose to socially isolate themselves in order to prevent such stigmatizing experiences from occurring. While there is documentation of such social withdrawal by individuals convicted of sex offenses (Winnick & Bodkin, 2008; Mercado, Alvarez, & Levenson, 2008; Levenson, D'Amora, & Hern, 2007), individuals in this study who had been convicted of other offenses also reported engaging in preventative isolation, thus potentially limiting their ability to develop social bonds within their community. Additional exploration on returning citizens' decisions to engage in preventative isolation as a result of stigma anticipation is needed.

The second finding of particular interest from this project is returning citizens advocating for the use of surveillance technology to document interactions between themselves and criminal justice actors, particularly police. The desire for increased surveillance of criminal justice actor and citizen interactions was two-fold. First, individuals felt that due to their criminal pasts, they would be stigmatized by criminal justice actors, which could lead to them being unjustly charged with committing crimes, not having their accounts of a situation seen as trustworthy or legitimate, or not being worthy of victimhood. Therefore, surveillance technology such as electronic monitoring and video documentation could help support a returning citizens' claim of innocence or victimization. Second, surveillance of criminal justice-related interactions could be used to document wrong-doing on the part of police or other

criminal justice actors and therefore hold them accountable for their behavior. Thus, surveillance was seen as both a tool for challenging stigma as well as promoting justice. This finding is of particular interest and there is little existing scholarship on returning citizens' of perceptions of surveillance technology, specifically research indicating the support for the use of such technology, therefore this is another area that warrants additional examination.

<div align="center">RQ3: Race, Gender, & Geography and the Reentry Process</div>

Finally, in regards to the role of race, gender, and geography on the reentry process for returning citizens, there was one finding that was of particular interest. Individuals who resided in both the Northern and Southern counties of Delaware discussed the belief that "everybody knows everybody", however, the impact of this belief on experiences and perceptions of stigma was distinctly different for residents of the North compared to the South. Those living in New Castle County (Northernmost county in Delaware) discussed how the belief that "everybody knows everybody" resulted in less stigmatization from community members. Individuals stated that people in this county, and in Wilmington in particular, had more involvement with the criminal justice system, either directly, or through relationships with family and friends. Therefore, there was a greater understanding and acceptance of people who have been incarcerated because community members already had existing relationships with people who have been through a similar experience. In contrast, close-knit, or "everybody knows everybody" communities were seen as exacerbating stigmatization of returning citizens in Southern counties. People that resided in Sussex County (the Southernmost county in Delaware) discussed how in their community they may be the only person people know that has served time in

prison, and therefore are the first person people suspect when a crime occurs, or are generally less accepted by those who have no direct experience or relationships with those involved in the criminal justice system. These contrasting accounts of how returning citizens are regarded in close-knit communities indicates that the unique characteristics of such communities can result in varying degrees of social acceptance and stigmatization.

Limitations of Current Study

This project has several limitations that should be considered. First, findings from this research come from only 43 adult participants returning to their communities from Delaware prisons. Due to challenges in recruitment of participants, I don't feel that I achieved total saturation of information among women. Additionally, experiences of stigma and social bond development showed clear patterns across participants, however, I feel that the area of legal consciousness and the variation and nuance of its relationships was unable to be as thoroughly explored as I would like. The way individuals think about and experience the law in their lives is so deeply embedded in their culture, childhood, past experiences, and their social networks that each participant's account of the role of the law in their lives or their attitudes towards the criminal justice system was fairly unique. While some general themes did emerge and were discussed in the results chapters, there is definitely more examination that needs to take place in regards to this particular theoretical concept. A larger sample of both men and women may have allowed for greater examination of the many personal, social, and legal factors that played a role in individuals' reentry experience. Despite the smaller sample and perhaps less than ideal saturation of information received, directed content analysis revealed important themes and relationships between

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concepts with the current sample which provide a meaningful framework and compass for the development of a larger study in this area where I can recruit a broader sample of participants and ask questions more directed at enhancing our understanding of the role of legal consciousness in the lives of formerly incarcerated men and women.

The second and third limitations to the current research are related and have to do with the recruitment of participants and the site where interviews were conducted. Almost all of the returning citizens were recruited through probation and parole departments across the state and were interviewed at these locations as well. As discussed in chapter 3, the choice to recruit through probation and parole was out of both convenience and practicality: probation offices have a constant pool of recently incarcerated men and women to recruit from and interviews done at probation and parole offices were convenient for people who were often already waiting to check-in with their probation officers and had time to participate in an interview during that waiting period. People also did not have to worry about transportation, child-care, or scheduling issues when they participated in interviews at probation and parole since they already had the time off or available that day to meet with their officers. However, this choice in recruitment and interview site undoubtedly impacted: 1) the types of individuals that I was able to recruit and speak with and 2) the types of information that was shared with me.

Post-release supervision is a common practice in Delaware, with a majority of released individuals required to spend at least some period of time following their release under correctional supervision, from the 12 month minimum amount to five years or more of supervision following release. However, due to factors such as infractions incurred while incarcerated, truth-in-sentencing policies, good time credit

eligibility, or how long ago someone was originally sentenced and incarcerated, a percentage of people either are not required to complete post-release supervision or have "maxed out" their time under correctional supervision while still incarcerated. As of 2012, approximately 21% of people incarcerated in Delaware maxed-out and do not have to serve any post-release supervision time (PEW Center, 2014). Since I recruited primarily through probation and parole departments, I was unable to identify and recruit those individuals who had been released without supervision. These individuals may have notable differences in their reentry experience due to the lack of ongoing structure, expectations, and support provided by probation and parole or community-based reentry programs. Therefore it would be important to gain insight from these men and women to better understand the role of post-release supervision and programming (or a lack thereof) on the reentry process. This would also contribute to existing research on outcomes-focused, recidivism studies that examine varying levels of supervision intensity following release from prison which has inconsistent findings regarding the benefits of intensive supervision strategies. Some have found little to no evidence that increased supervision intensity results in lower recidivism rates (Georgiou, 2014; Hyatt & Barnes, 2014), while others have found that increased supervision intensity could result in a greater likelihood of violations and revocations (Petersilia & Turner, 1993). Still others have found that more intensive supervision is related to greater community involvement, social bond development, and securing employment (Hamilton 2010; MacKenzie and Brame, 2001). A qualitative examination of how varying levels of post-release supervision, including those who receive no supervision, on the lived experience of those released from prison would

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add to what we already know about reentry in terms of outcomes such as recidivism by providing information on the process of reentry as well.

Relatedly, all of the returning citizens were interviewed at either probation or parole offices or one of two community reentry programs and therefore the information that they chose to share with me may have been influenced by the environment. I was only permitted to interview people in an office with the door closed in two of the settings (one probation office and at the reentry program location) and was required to keep the office door open in all of the other probation locations, resulting in the potential for probation officers to overhear the conversations between the returning citizens and myself. It is therefore possible that people chose not to disclose certain negative experiences or opinions regarding their probation officer or their supervision requirements for fear that this would negatively impact their relationship with their officer or their supervision. This may have had particular influence on people's tendency to reflect very favorably about their officers. Beyond experiences directly related to supervision, the law enforcement environment may have made people uneasy regarding disclosing any negative stories or views about the criminal justice system, social interactions, or other behaviors since their release from prison (particularly of these behaviors were illegal or otherwise prohibited under their supervision requirements) for fear of having those conversations overheard or caught on audio or video recording. Even if it was not the case, there was still often the sense that the interview space could easily be under surveillance if someone desired and that our private interviews in most of the locations were not really private. This is not to say that I believe people were misleading when they provided positive feedback about their probation officer or the support they received during their reentry process by

criminal justice or community agencies. I think that those I spoke with genuinely felt that way, but I do believe that there may have been challenges, struggles, or maybe social interactions that were not shared with me for fear that it would get back to their supervision officer. Also, doing interviews in a more formal, law enforcement setting, prevented me from gaining insight into the greater context of the experiences shared with me since I did not get to see where they were currently residing, meet family members, or observe the neighborhoods or communities that they were living in since their release. These elements of people's lives would have provided additional depth to the stories they shared since I would have had a better understanding of their current circumstances than what could be gained through only verbal descriptions conveyed in an unused office space within the probation and parole department.

In summary, I believe that the current project has three primary limitations that readers need to be aware of when reading and interpreting findings: 1) the sample was small, particularly my sample of women, 2) participants were primarily recruited through probation and parole departments, thus excluding any individuals who did not receive post-release supervision following their incarceration, and 3) all but two of the interviews took place at probation and parole departments and therefore certain experiences and opinions may have been filtered or not disclosed for fear of a negative response from probation officers. This means that these findings reflect this particular population, who many have potential to skew towards positive information because of the possible influence of location. Future research with different data collection strategies will need to expand upon these findings.

Contributions to the Literature

Despite the limitations, the powerful accounts shared by returning citizens in my study make significant contributions to both the fields of criminology and law and society. First, this exploratory study integrated theoretical concepts in order to provide a more comprehensive, conceptually sophisticated understanding of the daily-lived experience of men and women coming out of prison. There is little to no existing research that seeks to understand or examine how experiences and interactions with the law influence individuals' ability to develop and maintain social bonds as well as manage feelings and perceptions of stigma encountered in their day-to-day reentry experiences. Theoretical integration is not often found within the field of criminology (Bernard & Snipes, 1996) and the body of literature in which the fields of criminology and law and society "speak to" and inform one another's examination of crime-related social phenomena is still relatively limited. The current project integrates criminological theories by discussing the potential relationships between experiences of real or perceived stigma and the development and maintenance of social bonds.   It explores the way in which the legal consciousness of individuals coming out of prison may shape their perceptions and reactions to stigma as well as their level of attachment to and participation within their communities and conventional society. This may be the first study to combine these three theoretical concepts into an integrated and interrelated model to better understand the reentry process for men and women coming out of prison.

Second, this research adds to the small, but growing number of theoretically informed studies within the field of criminal justice, which is known to be largely a-theoretical in nature (Bernard & Engel, 2001; Duffee & Maguire, 2007). Explanations for limited theoretical inquiry in criminal justice research has often been that the

criminal justice system and the actors and agencies within it are so numerous and diverse that development or application of a broad theoretical framework would simply be insufficient to capture the complexities of such a system. This may be true if trying to create a general theory that could explain a broad spectrum of actions and outcomes in the criminal justice system, however, this does not mean that criminal justice inquiry cannot be theoretically driven. I also assert that while a criminal population was targeted for this study, this research is less "criminological" in nature and more focused on the ways in which the criminal justice system, and the policies and laws related to it, shape the reentry process for men and women. This was not a study to determine why certain individuals commit crime or refrain from crime, it was a study of the day-to-day lived experience of reentry and the process of navigating the various legal and social obstacles that are a part of it.

However, this process of reentry is significantly shaped and informed by: 1) how we think about crime and criminals in our society, and 2) how the law responds to, restricts, or supports individuals previously involved in criminal behavior. Therefore, theoretical concepts from the fields of criminology and law and society are natural frameworks within which to position this research. Additionally, based on the particular topic and population of this research study, I believe that integration of these theories is necessary for a more informed understanding of each of these theoretical concepts. It is evident from the research findings that stigma and social bonds were very much influenced by how the law responds to criminals in our society. Legally sanctioned exclusion from conventional society through employment restrictions coupled with the loss of certain rights and privileges provides legitimacy to the stigmatizing and rejecting behavior of society towards individuals coming out of

prison. The ways in which individuals perceive and experience this system of legally sanctioned discrimination and social exclusion further shapes the way they are able to integrate into conventional society. Therefore, the way in which we as a society respond to crime very much relates to the theoretical explanations of why individuals commit crimes, or in the case of individuals coming out of prison, why individuals may commit new crimes. Furthermore, the way in which individuals experience and perceive this legal response to crime will shape their willingness and ability to cope with experiences of stigma and form social bonds to conventional society. Therefore, the integration of theoretical concepts from criminology and law and society provides a much more comprehensive understanding of the criminal justice policies related to reentry and the daily-lived experiences of individuals going through that process.

The third contribution of this research is the finding that stigma, social bonds, and legal consciousness are dynamic concepts that are continuously shaped by daily social interaction and experiences, adding to existing work that examine the role of law on individual identity and lived experience (Engle & Munger, 2003; Hull, 2003). Additionally reentry is conceptualized as a process that encompasses a multitude of successes and struggles that occur day-to-day for men and women coming out of prison. So much research on reentry focuses on outcome-specific measures (i.e. rearrest, reincarceration, etc.) to determine whether reentry was or was not a success and use static predictors of that success such as criminal history, program completion, or dynamic factors such as employment that is typically captured at the time of assessment (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996; Helmus, Hanson, Thornton, Babchishin, & Harris, 2012; Hamilton et al., 2015). These studies have been

instrumental in advancing our understanding of factors related to reentry success and failure which have then been incorporated into reentry-focused policy and program.

However, speaking with participants for this research made it clear that these individuals were not focused on a single indicator of their reentry success or focusing on their three-year recidivism risk; they were experiencing reentry one day at a time. For these individuals, each day could have numerous successes and failures, and these moments may or may not ultimately relate to a measure of success that is defined as avoiding rearrest for a certain number of years. An interpersonal conflict or stigmatizing experience may never be captured on a conventional risk assessment instrument but that negative event could be a "failure" that results in a loss in motivation which slows down the job seeking process, or leads to a relapse which could send someone with a substance abuse issue back to prison.

While risk assessment instruments have purpose and value for gaining a general assessment of someone's immediate needs and supports to aid in the development of a reentry plan, it is also important for supervision officers and reentry support staff to question and assess how individuals are going through the reentry *process* on a daily basis and to gain insight on the small success and failures that are occurring each and every day (Feeley, 1979; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 199; Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2007; Visher, 2011). So many people discussed how the "small" things in their lives, such as someone giving them a compliment or encouraging remark, holding their child, or speaking at an NA or AA meeting could change their entire outlook about themselves and their ability to succeed in their reentry. Research with marginalized populations has shown how advocacy and encouragement can change the lives of individuals caught in a life of instability, chaos,

and violence (Rios, 2011). It is important for research to recognize the impact that daily experiences and social interactions can have on someone's life who is recently released from prison and that for most of these men and women, there is no "end point" to reentry, it is a continuous, personal process with many peaks and valleys along the way.

The forth contribution of this research is the use of narratives shared by a group that is dehumanized as a result of the criminal conviction and incarceration process, and whose voices are often inaccessible or undervalued in criminal justice research (Kilty, Fabian, & Felices-Luna, 2014; La Vigne, Wolf, & Jannetta, 2004; Mobley, Henry, & Plemmons, 2007). Research on reentry is dominated by evaluation studies focusing on outcome measures such as recidivism rates or data from risk assessment or surveys. While information from currently or recently incarcerated populations is collected, the "voices" of these individuals are not often found in these types of studies. The current research adds to the limited, but growing number of studies that share the experiences, opinions, and insights from individuals going through the reentry process (Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 199; Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2007; Visher, 2011).

By allowing individuals to share their stories, we gain far more information into aspects of reentry that may not be considered by researchers relying on survey questions, or who do not have similar backgrounds and experiences as their participants and therefore may inadvertently narrow the focus of their inquiries. In prior research on the experiences of family members of registrants, we found that these spouses and children dealt with stressors that we as scholars on the topic never thought to ask about, such as the physiological impact of chronic stress and anxiety as

a result of enduring the stigma and social restrictions that accompanies being a partner with someone who has been convicted of a sex offense (Kilmer and Leon, n.d.).

In the current project, findings related to the experience of stigma for adopting a conventional life-style or the desire of participants for increased surveillance of criminal justice interactions were not something I would have found if I had not encouraged participants to speak freely about their opinions and experiences and instead relied strictly on a closed-set of survey questions. This insight on the value of participant-produced knowledge aligns with the general themes of standpoint theory (or feminist standpoint theory) that assert that knowledge construction is rooted in social position and power dynamics (Harding, 1991). Therefore, by speaking with those who are marginalized or disempowered by these dynamics, we gain information about social phenomenon that differs from only using knowledge created by those who occupy a more privileged social position (Harding, 1991; Disch & Hawkesworth, 2015). By seeking to understand the reentry process from the position of individuals currently going through that process, we acquire knowledge that may not have been possible if only speaking with probation officers or reentry program staff.

In addition to learning about struggles or challenges that may not have come to light if participants were not encouraged to share their stories and opinions, returning citizens also provided numerous suggestions on how criminal justice policies and practices would be reformed or improved to better assist individuals coming out of prison. These suggestions often included specific ideas for programming both inside the prison and out in the community, resources and support groups for individuals coming out of prison, and post-release supervision policy reforms that would help people have a more successful reentry experience while still promoting the goal of

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public safety. I feel that there is a generally dismissive attitude towards the suggestions and opinions put forth by correctional populations on how to change current policies and practices, perhaps fueled by assumptions that individuals involved in the criminal justice system will suggest strategies that somehow undermine broader criminal justice goals of safety and justice (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004). However, participants overwhelmingly wanted to promote these same goals by suggesting greater accountability and evaluation of law enforcement and other criminal justice actors, increased access to education opportunities, support programs for individuals coming out of prison to help with the transition from prison to community, and mental health and substance abuse treatment for individuals whose criminal behavior is motivated by these issues versus punitive sanctions. Many of these policy proposals align with what professionals working within these systems, service providers, and criminal justice actors are also advocating.

These suggestions do not sound like demands from a discontented segment of society wishing to demolish our current system of criminal justice. They are reasonable and legitimate improvements to promote a fair criminal justice system and reduce the likelihood of individuals engaging in future criminal behavior. I hope that by sharing people's stories, the value of their voice contributing to the conversation about how to develop reentry policies and programs that aid in the successful return of individual to their communities is recognized and gains appreciation. What better source of insight on reentry and what could help make the reentry process more successful than the men and women currently going through that very process?

Areas for Future Research

The current project was instrumental in identifying areas for future research for both myself and others who do scholarly work in this field. First, it became evident when I asked people about their preparations prior to their release from prison that most felt in-prison programming, particularly with a focus on reentry, is critical for a smoother, more successful reentry experience. People often spoke about the skills and resources they gained through their participation in prison-based programming including substance-abuse treatment therapeutic communities, anger management, and parenting classes. This isn't to say that every person had only positive things to say about their in-prison programming experience. But even those who found the specific programs they participated in to be unhelpful firmly believed that reentry preparation needs to take place while in prison and many had suggestions for the types of programs and topics that should be included.

Therefore, I believe a natural expansion of this study would be to recruit participants who are still incarcerated to gain further insight into their reentry preparations and the role of prison-based programming in that preparation process. This research could be conducted in two ways with varying levels of inclusion of incarcerated individuals in the research process. First, participants could be recruited who are currently incarcerated and nearing their release from prison (i.e. within six months of release) and could be interviewed while incarcerated with questions focused primarily on reentry preparations, in-prison programming and resources, and participants' expectations about their reentry process. These participants could then be contacted for follow-up interviews following their release from prison (preferably within the first two-six months of their release) to gain insight into how participants'

reentry preparations while still incarcerated have or have not helped in their reentry process.

An alternative strategy would be to involve incarcerated individuals as "insider" researchers on a study that examines existing prison-based programming focused on reentry who could provide valuable insight on the types of questions and issues that should be addressed in the research, as well as conduct interviews and focus groups with incarcerated individuals that may be less willing to speak with an "outsider" researcher. If possible, these researchers could continue to work on the project following their release from prison and could again provide great insight into aspects of the reentry process that myself as an outsider and someone who has never been incarcerated may not think about asking or exploring.

A second expansion of the current research is to include information and insight from service-providers in the reentry process, particularly those who work in the community as probation or supervision officers or at a community-based reentry resource center. While I mentioned earlier the value of gaining insight from the men and women who are actually going through the reentry process, it was clear that the interactions between these individuals and their probation officers or other service providers played a primary role in shaping the reentry experience. Returning citizens overwhelmingly expressed that their probation officer was a source support and those that were involved in I-ADAPT or other reentry programs (i.e. Reentry Court, Delaware Achievement Center) also felt that officers and staff members of these programs were helpful and supportive. In my own casual conversations with several probation officers, it was clear that most of them genuinely wanted to see their probationers succeed and at times voiced frustration over the constraints in resources

to provide the level of support that they wanted for those under their supervision. I also feel like there is a desire from officers and staff to share their own stories, successes, and struggles since most of these conversations with officers occurred unsolicited, for example when they approached me in the office or hallway. Therefore, understanding the reentry process from the perspective of the service-providers may provide a more inclusive understanding about the reentry process by hearing from individuals who are providing supervision, services, and resources during the reentry process in addition to those who are the recipient of those services.

Finally, based on the gender-related themes that emerged even with such a limited sample of women, I feel the findings warrant a deeper investigation in the unique experiences of women coming out of prison. The fact that many of the women in my sample were primary caregivers of children before their incarceration indicates that women, likely more so than men (at least based on the men I interviewed), have an additional obstacle to navigate in their reentry process: regaining custody of their children (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001). They not only experience the pressures of finding employment, housing, and other resources they need to support themselves, but they are also attempting to attain the needed resources to support their children, in addition to working through the potential legal hurdles related to child custody. Those who may not have lost entire legal guardianship over their children were still faced with the daunting task of reconnecting with their children and assuming the parent-role after an extend absence from the child's life. Additionally, some women in this study commented on the additional condemnation they felt incarcerated mothers received due to being perceived as "bad mothers" because of their criminal behavior or incarceration. Capturing these particular experiences were beyond the scope of the

original project, but could provide valuable information about the unique experiences of parents, particularly mothers who are coming out of prison. Women were also more likely to report experiences of victimization, including sexual victimization, as well as more intense emotional responses to the reentry process compared to men. Both of these gender-related themes further emphasize the need to better understand the experiences of women coming out of prison and identify the services and resources women may need to foster a more positive reentry process.

Policy Implications and Conclusion

The findings from this research illuminate several implications for reentry-related policy and program reform. First, returning citizens had numerous suggestions for how to better assist those coming out of prison. When asked what resources or services would have been useful to aid in their reentry process, the most popular response was related to finding stable employment. People acknowledged that skill building and resume construction classes were useful, but expressed frustration at the lack of actual job seeking opportunities as well as non-temporary or part-time employment options available upon release. Most job applications are completed online and restrictions on internet use or access to a computer automatically place people at a disadvantage for maximizing the number of applications they can submit compared to individuals who have these resources. Additionally, people wished that reentry-services, including probation and parole departments would try to build relationships with local employers so that there is a network of approved and welcoming businesses where recently released individuals could apply for jobs. Also, multiple people suggested the creation of internship programs that would allow employers to "audition" returning citizens on the job before making a hiring decision.

This idea is particularly beneficial because not only does it provide the opportunity for recently released individuals to gain job skills and make a positive, in-person impression with an employer, but it provides employers with an incentive to consider employees with criminal backgrounds by allowing the employer to preview and assess that individual before committing to hire them. Employment internship programs for returning citizens could be an effective strategy to increase trust among employers to hire people with criminal backgrounds, help recently released individuals to find employment by allowing them to make a positive impression in-person, and can provide an opportunity for people to gain job experience even if they ultimately do not get hired by that particular company.

The second most common suggestion that people made was to create an "NA/AA" type of support group for men and women coming out prison. This would create a positive forum for individuals to interact with others who are going through a similar process, develop social support networks within the local community, and provide an opportunity for people to "give back" or share their successes or insight with others who may be earlier in the process. For those who had never been incarcerated before or did not have friends or family members who had been incarcerated, a support group consisting of other returning citizens was seen as a way to feel less isolated and alone going through the reentry process and a chance to experience sympathy and understanding from those who may have similar struggles or concerns. Others suggested that this could be a source of positive motivation and inspiration by creating a space for people to come together and share information and success stories. As mentioned in chapter 4, people voiced a desire to "give back" to their communities, often by wanting to share their stories with others or to volunteer to

work with people who are experiencing hardships and this could provide a unique opportunity for those individuals who want to help others. There is in fact an already growing movement for the creation of peer-support groups, both nationally and within the state of Delaware.[20]

The suggestions rooted in individuals' desires to make positive impressions with potential employers or use their experiences to help "give back" to their community by working with those in need or who may also be going through reentry speak to a broader policy implication: the adoption of a strengths-based approach to reentry. This is not a novel concept, as Maruna and LeBel (2003) advocated for the use of a strengths-based reentry court program well over a decade ago. Current reentry programs and supervision practices primarily rely on the threat of sanctions or incarceration, focusing on the "risk" an individual has for relapsing or returning to criminal activity. In contrast, a strengths-based reentry program focuses on the achievements of the individual, rewarding accomplishments and successes, while adopting restorative-justice strategies to create opportunities for individuals to make amends for their past behavior and "give back" to their communities. As they explain, "strength-based or restorative approaches ask not what a person's deficits are, but rather what positive contribution the person can make" (97). These contributions often take the form of community service projects such as helping remove graffiti from playgrounds and parks, speaking with troubled youth, and helping the homeless.

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[20] The Rick Van Story Resource Center in New Castle County and the A.C.E. (Acceptance, Change, and Empowerment) Peer Resource Center in Sussex County are both peer-support centers for returning citizens within Delaware. Programs Delaney Street in California are peer-mentorship programs that use a strengths-based approach to support and empower returning citizens (Maruna & LeBel, 2003).

Strengths-based programs are uncommon in the United States, but those that do exist tend to focus on helping individuals gain skills through mentorship programs and community service projects that they can then use to mentor and assist others, empowering the individual in the process. These approaches directly relate to Maruna's (2001) assertion that in order for individuals to desist from crime, they first need to adopt a pro-social identity that then motivates and guides their behavior and decision-making. By providing opportunities for individuals to make positive changes in their communities and the lives of others, strengths-based approaches help individuals develop a positive, empowered identity, develop bonds with their community, and remove the negative stigma attached to their offender label (Braithwaite, 2000; Maruna 2001; Benson, Alaird, Burton, & Cullen, 2011). Returning citizens' stories often illustrated how the current reentry practices contributed to their feelings of stigmatization and social exclusion through electronic monitoring, prohibitions on social interactions, and the threat of punitive action if mistakes were made. While it is unlikely that criminal justice agencies will completely abandon risk- or deficit-focused supervision and reentry practices, a balance of behavioral constraints to appease (perhaps misguided) public safety concerns with opportunities for restorative justice practices that promote community reintegration and individual empowerment could provide men and women coming out of prison with the support and encouragement needed for success.

In conclusion, I feel that this project ultimately allows readers to gain a better recognition of the humanity of the men and women coming out of prison in this country. Their stories illuminate the fact that behind statistics on risk assessment scores and recidivism rates, there are people, people who are going through an

emotionally, socially, and legally complex process of moving forward with their lives following a period of incarceration. While there may be those who are determined to return to a life of crime and victimization, there are many others who want to move past their former selves, but are frightened and overwhelmed by what it will take to do so. By recognizing that these aren't just "ex-offenders", but mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons who are seeking social acceptance and an opportunity to do right by their families and communities, we begin to appreciate the struggles that they experience as well as what it takes for the successes to occur. I hope that the stories of these men and women inspire each of us to support those who may be going through the reentry process in what ways we are able, because as many of the people in this research stated, most are just looking for that open door.

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Appendix A

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF PARTICIPANTS

Alvin is a 43 year-old Hispanic male who was incarcerated for nine years and has been released for 6 weeks. He is currently living in a shelter/temporary in Kent County and working part-time. He went to school up through the 11th grade. He is not currently in a relationship.

Anastacia is a 30 year-old, white female who was incarcerated for five months and has been released for six months. She is currently living with her family in Sussex County and is unemployed, but trying to find work. She went to school up through the 9th grade, has three children (none residing with her), and is not in a relationship.

Andrew is a 25 year-old black male who was incarcerated for six months and has been released for 3 months. He is currently living with family in New Castle County and is working part-time. He went to school through the 11th grade and has one child (not living with him). He is not in a relationship.

Atlas is a 27 year-old black male who was incarcerated for 7 years and has been released for three months. He is currently homeless (staying in a tent in a friend's grandmother's backyard) in Kent County and unemployed. He went to school through the 12th grade but did not graduate. He has no children and is not currently in a relationship.

Cassie is a 34 year-old, white female who was incarcerated for five years and has been released for eight months. She is currently living with in a shelter/temporary in New Castle County and is unemployed, but trying to find work. She went to school up through the 9th grade, has three children (none residing with her), and is not in a relationship.

Chimmy is a 33 year-old black male who was incarcerated for 11 years and has been released for 12 months. He is currently living in his own residence in New Castle County and working full time. He has completed some college courses. He has one child that is not living with him and is not currently in a relationship.

Chris is a 30 year-old black male who was incarcerated for 6 months and has been released for one day. He is currently living in a shelter/temporary housing in Kent County and is unemployed. He went to school through 9th grade. He has two children that are not living with him and is not currently in a relationship.

Clifton is a 57 year-old black male who was incarcerated for 10 years and has been released for seven months. He is currently living in a shelter/temporary housing

in Kent County and is on a fixed income. He has earned his GED. He has no children and is not currently in a relationship.

Cookie is a 49 year-old white female who was incarcerated for two years and has been released for four months. She is currently living in a recovery house in Sussex County and is working part-time at a fast food restaurant. She has an Associate's degree, two children (though none living with her) and is separated from her husband.

David is a 40 year-old white male who was incarcerated for 11 months (but was incarcerated in the past for 7 years) and has been released for three months. He is currently living in a shelter/temporary housing in Kent County and is not working due to a disability. He has completed some college courses. He has one adult child and one child under the age of 18 (not residing with him) and is divorced from his wife.

Dechelle is a 50 year-old, black female who was incarcerated for five months and has been released for two years. She is currently living with family in New Castle County and is not working due to a disability. She has her GED, eight adult children, and is currently not in a relationship.

Dominic is a 64year-old white male who was incarcerated for 4 months (he had not been convicted of a crime, but was waiting for hearing) and has been released for seven months. He is currently living with a roommate in New Castle County and is a retired writer. He has a Master's degree. He has two adult children, and is divorced.

Don is a 44 year-old white male who was incarcerated for 12 years and has been released for nine months. He is currently with family in New Castle County and working part-time. He has completed his GED, has no children, and is in a new relationship.

Einstein is a 46 year-old white male who was incarcerated for three years and has been released for one year. He is currently homeless in Kent County and working part-time at a fast food restaurant. He has some college education, two children (none residing with him), and is divorced.

Eli is a 30 year-old black male who was incarcerated for three years and has been released for two months. He is currently living in his own residence in Sussex County and is working full-time. He has some college education, three children, and is currently engaged.

E-man is a 55 year-old black male who was incarcerated for twenty years and has been released for two weeks. He is currently living with family in New Castle County and is not working due to a disability. He has completed some college courses, has one adult child, and is married.

Ernie is a 69 year-old white male who was incarcerated for six years and has been released for eleven months. He is currently living with a roommate in Kent County and is self-employed full time. He has completed a vocational school program, has four adult children, and is divorced.

Frank is a 38 year-old black male who was incarcerated for one year and has been released for hour months. He is currently living in low-income housing in New Castle County and is unemployed, but looking for a job. He has completed high school, has four children (none residing in the home, and is not in a relationship.

Fred is a 47 year-old black male who was incarcerated for three years and has been released for four months. He is current living in his own residence in Sussex County and is working full time. He went to school through the eleventh grade, has two adult children, and is married.

Howdie is a 72 year-old white male who was incarcerated for five years and has been released for eleven months. He is current living in low-income housing in Kent County and is employed part-time. He has completed a vocational school program, has three adult children, and is divorced.

James Brown is a 26 year-old black male who was incarcerated for ten months and has been released for two weeks. He is currently living in his own residence in Sussex County and working full time. He went to school through the eleventh grade, has three children (none residing with him), and is not in a relationship.

JB is a 32 year-old Hispanic and white male who was incarcerated for seven months and has been released for three months. He is currently living in a shelter/temporary housing in New Castle County and is unemployed, but looking for work. He went to school through the twelfth grade (but did not graduate), has one child (not residing with him), and is not in a relationship.

John is a 46 year-old black male who was incarcerated for nine years and has been released for three weeks. He is currently living in low-income housing in Kent County and is employed part-time. He is a high school graduate, has no children, and is not in a relationship.

Jose is a 40 year-old Hispanic male who was incarcerated for six months (but has been incarcerated in the past for ten years) and has been released for one month. He has his own residence in New Castle County and is employed full time. He is a high school graduate, has four children (one in the home), and is in a common law marriage.

Kaanachi is a 23 year-old white male who was incarcerated for one year and has been released for eight months. He is currently living with family in New Castle

County and is unemployed, but looking for a job. He has his GED and completed some vocational training, has no children, and is not in a relationship.

Kisha is a 45 year-old black female who was incarcerated for 76 days and has been released for one week. She is current living in a shelter in New Castle County and is unemployed, but looking for a job. She completed some college, has two adult children, and is married.

Lamar is a 27 year-old black male who was incarcerated for three years and has been released for one month. He is current residing with his family in Sussex County and is working part-time. He has completed some college, has one child (not residing with him) and is not in a relationship.

Lucky is a 22 year-old white male who was incarcerated for three years and has been released for one month. He is currently living in a halfway house in Kent County and is working full time. He has completed some college, has one child (not living with him), and is in a relationship.

Hattie is a 54 year-old white female who was incarcerated for two years and has been released for three weeks. She is currently residing in her own home in Sussex County and is working part-time. She has an Associate's degree, no children, and is not in a relationship.

Marie is a 26 year-old female who was incarcerated for eleven months and has been released for four months. She is currently residing with her family in Sussex County and is working full time. She completed middle school, has two children living with her, and is not in a relationship.

Mega is a43 year-old black male who was incarcerated for 3.5 years and has been released for six months. He is currently living in a shelter/temporary housing in New Castle County and is unemployed and seeking disability benefits. He went to school through the twelfth grade, has four children (none residing with him), and is not in a relationship.

Michelle is a 27 year-old black female who was incarcerated for three months and has been released for three months. She is currently residing in a shelter/temporary housing in New Castle County and is unemployed, but looking for work. She went to school through the eleventh grade, has two children (none residing with her) and is in a relationship.

Phil is a 50 year-old black male who was incarcerated for five years (and has been incarcerated for sixteen years in the past) and has been released for one week. Is currently living in a halfway house in New Castle County and is unemployed. He has his GED and is certified in Masonry, has one adult child, and is not in a relationship.

Q is a 23 year-old black male who was incarcerated for two years and has been released for two months. He is currently residing with his family in New Castle County and is unemployed, but looking for work. He went to school through the twelfth grade, has no children, and is not in a relationship.

Randolph is a 32 year-old white male who was incarcerated for thirteen months and has been released for two months. He is living in a shelter/temporary housing in Sussex County and is working full time. He has his GED, one child (not living with him), and is not in a relationship.

Rico is a 25 year-old Hispanic male who was incarcerated for two years and has been released for six months. He is currently living with a roommate in Kent County and is employed full time. He is a high school graduate, has no children, and is not in a relationship.

Rob is a 39 year-old black male who was incarcerated for six months and has been released for six months. He is living in a shelter/temporary housing in New Castle County and is working full time. He is a high school graduate, has one child (not residing with him), and is not in a relationship.

Sally is a 30 year-old white female who was incarcerated for eight months and has been released for six months. She is living with family is Sussex County and is working full time. She has completed some college, has three children (one living with her), and is separated from her husband.

Sincere is a 23 year-old black male who was incarcerated for eight years and has been released for two months. He is living in a recovery house in Sussex County and is working full time. He has completed some college, has no children, and is not in a relationship.

Steve is a 32 year-old white male who was incarcerated for two years and has been released for two weeks. He is living with his family in Sussex County and is working part-time. He has his GED, one child (not residing with him), and is divorced.

Steve C. is a 24 year-old Hispanic and black male who was incarcerated for 3 years and has been released for two months. He is living with his family is Sussex County and is working full time. He went to school through the eighth grade, has one child (not residing with him), and is not in a relationship.

Susan is a 47 Year-old white female who was incarcerated for six years and has been released for two months. She is living with her family in Sussex County and is currently unemployed, but looking for work. She has her GED, has four children (two residing with her), and is engaged.

Terry is a 27 year-old white male who was incarcerated for two years and has been released for three weeks. He is living with his family in New Castle County and is unemployed, but looking for work. He has his GED, no children, and is not in a relationship.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank-you for taking the time to participate in this project, it is greatly appreciated. Do you have any questions before we get started? [Answer any remaining questions about the interview or project before proceeding]. Remember, you do not have to answer any questions you don't want to and you can stop the interview at any time. Why don't we get started?

<u>Identifiers</u>

First, would you mind providing a made-up name that I can use if I quote you? (this should not be your real name)

How long were you last incarcerated?

How long has it been since you've been released?

<u>Prior to Release</u>

What were your thoughts/feelings about reentry before you were released?

What preparations/programming did you do in order to prepare for your release?

What were you most excited about/looking forward to?

What were you most concerned/nervous about?

<u>Since Release</u>

What was the first day like? The first week? The first month?

What have been some of the most positive experiences you've had since being released?

What have been some of the most difficult experiences you've had since being released?

What have been some of the accomplishments you've had since being released?

What have been some of the setbacks/issues you've had since being released?

Were the preparations you did to prepare for your release *(refer to preparations described above)* helpful once you were released? In what ways? In what ways were they not as helpful? Thinking back, what programs/preparations would have been more helpful?

Have you been able to get the services and resources you've needed since being released? What have those experiences been like?

How do you think others feel about people who are "ex-offenders" or those who have spent time in prison? *(probe for family members, employers, rest of society)*

How do you think of yourself now that you've been released? Do you think of yourself any differently because you've been incarcerated? In what ways? Do you every think of yourself as a criminal, offender, felon, etc?

How do you think others think about you specifically because you have been locked up or have a record? Why do you think they feel that way? *(Ask about family, co-workers, service providers, community, society)*

How have your relationships with (family, friends, co-workers, community) been since you've been released? How are these relationships different from before you were incarcerated? During the time you were incarcerated? Why do you think things are different?

Do you feel like you are welcome in your community? In what ways have you tried to connect and involve yourself in your community? Has there been any difficulty or ways in which you have felt unwelcome now that you are home?

Have you had any conflicts or disagreements since you've been released? Who have they been with? How have they been resolved?

What have been your experiences working within the criminal justice system since you've been released (probation/parole, law enforcement, court-related issues, etc)?

Tell me about your experience or opinions about the law. What about the criminal justice system? Have your views about the law *(or the criminal justice system)* changed from what they were before you were incarcerated? In what ways?

When you see a police officer in a car/on the street, what are the thoughts and feelings you have? Have those thoughts/feelings changed as a result of being locked up/coming home? Have you ever chose not to leave home/go somewhere because you feared police contact? (question added 10-01-2015 after topic reoccurred in prior interviews)

Where do you find encouragement and support in your life?

What are some things that you do to relieve stress, relax?

The word "reentry" is used to discuss the process of returning back to your community following spending time in prison and is defined in many ways. What does "reentry" mean for you?

Are there any other experiences you'd like to share with me?

Post-Interview Feedback

Now that the interview is over, I wanted to know whether you had any feedback about the interview itself or the project in general.

Are there any questions that you feel I should be asking that I haven't included? Are there any topics or issues you think I should include that are related to reentry that I haven't addressed?

Do you have any other suggestions for how to improve this project or any other comments you'd like to share?

Appendix C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

First, I'd like to collect a little more information about you. Remember, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

How old are you? _____

What gender do you identify with?

☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Other: _____

What race(s) do you identify with?

☐ White/Caucasian
☐ African American
☐ Hispanic
☐ Asian
☐ Native American
☐ Pacific Islander
☐ Other: _____

What is your current marital status?

☐ Rather not say
☐ Divorced
☐ Living with another
☐ Married
☐ Separated
☐ Single
☐ Widowed

What is your highest level of education completed?

☐ Grammar School
☐ High School or equivalent
☐ Vocational/Technical School (2 year)
☐ Some College
☐ College Graduate (4 year)

☐ Master's Degree (MS)
☐ Doctoral Degree (PhD)
☐ Professional Degree (MD, JD, etc.)
☐ Other: _____

What is your current employment status?

☐ Unemployed, not currently seeking employment
☐ Unemployed, currently seeking employment
☐ Underemployed, less than 20 hours per week
☐ Part-time, 21-39 Hours per week
☐ Full time, 40+ hours per week
☐ Other: _____

How many children under 18 years old live in your household?
☐ None
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4 or more

Which of the following best describes the area you live in?

☐ Urban
☐ Suburban/non-urban area
☐ Rural

Appendix D

IRB & DOC APPROVAL LETTERS AND CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hullihen Hall
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551
Ph: 302/831-2136
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: April 28, 2015

TO: Ashley Kilmer
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [742310-1] Reentry Experiences of Recently Incarcerated Men and Women

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: April 28, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: April 14, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Full Committee Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Full Committee Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

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RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hullihen Hall
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551
Ph: 302/831-2136
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: August 28, 2015

TO: Ashley Kilmer
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [742310-2] Reentry Experiences of Recently Incarcerated Men and Women

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: August 28, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: April 14, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 46.110 (b)(2)

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
Office of the Commissioner
245 McKEE ROAD
DOVER, DELAWARE 19904
Telephone: (302) 857-5239
Fax: (302) 622- 4457

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL to akilmer@udel.edu
Ms. Ashley Kilmer, M.S.
Graduate Student
Sociology and Criminal Justice Department
University of Delaware

June 30, 2015

Re: Research request re: Reentry Experiences of Recently Incarcerated
Men and Women

Dear Ms. Kilmer,

This letter sets forth approval from the Commissioner of Correction and the Chief of Planning of
the Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) in regard to the research request that you recently
submitted to the DOC Planning & Research Unit.

Principal Investigator:	Ashley Kilmer, M.S.
Institution Affiliation:	University of Delaware
DOC Point of Contact:	Joanna Champney, Chief of Planning
	Planning & Research Unit, Office of the Commissioner
Title of Research Proposal:	Reentry Experiences of Recently Incarcerated Men and Women
Type of Research Proposal:	Non-Grant Funded; Ph.D. Dissertation
IRB Approval:	University of Delaware; Approved April 28, 2015

Summary of Research Proposed: Administer qualitative interviews with current probationers
who were recently released from prison. Probationers will be recruited via flyers posted at
probation and through recruitment partnerships with specific probation officers. Currently
incarcerated individuals may also be recruited for interview upon their release, through
recruitment via I-ADAPT or pre-release housing units. The interview questions ask inmates and
probationers about how they perceive and/or experience stigma as a result of their "ex-offender"
status, how they develop, maintain, or lose social bonds during the first few months of release,
positive and negative experiences during reentry, how they define reentry success, what they feel
they need to be successful with reentry, and what services they have/will access to be successful.

Modifications to Research Design: See attached correspondence detailing communication
between Joanna Champney, Chief of Planning, DOC, and Ashley Kilmer, Principal Investigator.
The PI's modification responses have been reviewed by Joanna Champney and discussed with

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Chief Chris Klein, Bureau of Prisons, and Chief Alan Grinstead, Bureau of Community Corrections. The proposed research has been approved by the aforementioned parties.

Information for PI regarding visits to correctional facilities:

Research materials: Please plan to discuss the materials that you wish to bring with you (for example, manila folder, papers & pen) on the day of your visit(s) with the respective Warden's Office in advance. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to the DOC Central Office for assistance (Chief of Bureau of Prisons Chris Klein at Christopher.klein@state.de.us or Chief of Planning Joanna Champney at Joanna.champney@state.de.us).

Rules for visitor attire are as follows: Visitors' attire should be in good taste and grooming when entering the institution. Correctional staff will determine whether the visitor's clothing is appropriate based on the following guidelines: bathing suits; body suits; strapless or low cut, revealing tops; sleeveless shirts; tube tops; and any type of revealing clothing not adhering to the normal standards of decency will not be permitted. Dresses, skirts, culottes, and/or walking shorts must be no shorter than two inches above the knee, as measured from the bend in the back of the knee with the waistband in the normal position. Spandex pants, shorts, and leggings are not permitted alone. Leggings may be worn under a skirt. Any see-through material is not permitted.

Delaware DOC is pleased to assist you as you undertake research relating to the experiences of probationers who are navigating their reentry. Please note that while DOC leadership is granting approval for the study, we cannot guarantee the amenability and availability of prison facilities and/or probation offices to aid in your recruitment efforts, nor can we anticipate logistical constraints that may arise which could limit the DOC's ability to facilitate your research. We look forward to reviewing your findings when you have completed the study. Thank you for your interest in corrections and justice-involved individuals.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Coupe
Commissioner

Joanna R. Champney, M.A.
Chief of Planning

Attachments: DOC Policy re: research
                Research Proposal Feedback
                Kilmer Responses to Research Proposal Feedback
                Subsequent Correspondence re: Proposal Modifications

CC (via email copy):   Chief Chris Klein, Bureau of Prisons
                        Chief Alan Grinstead, Community Corrections

Documents on File Relating to Study: IRB Approval Letter, Approved Protocol, and Prisoners in Research Form
                                        2 Survey Instruments (Incarcerated Individuals, Recently Released Individuals)
                                        Contact Information Form for Follow Up
                                        Demographic Information Form
                                        Consent Forms (Incarcerated Individuals, Recently Released Individuals)
                                        Recruitment Flyer

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

322 Edward Laurence Smith Hall
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19716-2580
Ph: 302/831-2581
Fax: 302/831-2607

University of Delaware Informed Consent Form
Reentry Experiences of Recently Incarcerated Men and Women

Title of Project: Reentry Experiences of Recently Incarcerated Men and Women

Principal Investigator (s): Ashley Kilmer, akilmer@udel.edu, (302) 283-9923
Other Investigators: Professor Chrysanthi Leon, santhi@udel.edu

INSTRUCTIONS
You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form tells you about the study including its purpose, what you will do if you decide to participate, and any risks and benefits of being in the study. Please read the information below and ask the researcher about anything that was not clear before you decide whether to participate. Your participation is voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without penalty.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The goal of this study is to better understand what factors may affect whether someone succeeds or struggles when they are released from prison. Specifically, the study wants to know how different types of social support, being labeled as an "ex-offender", and day-to-day activities and challenges effect how someone goes through the reentry process. Little attention has been paid to the unique, daily experiences of men and women who have recently been released from prison, and this study seeks to address this gap. Results from this project will be shared with academics as well as those involved in reentry programs and policy. This project will be used to fulfill the requirements of the researcher's doctoral dissertation.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you have recently been released from prison. You will be 1 of about 60 individuals to participate in this research.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?
After the researcher has finished reviewing this consent form with you, and if you agree to participate in the research, you will be asked to complete an interview about your thoughts and feelings about reentry. The interview will take about 1 hour to complete. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with and can stop the interview at any time. You will also be asked if you would like to participate in a follow-up interview to share any updates on experiences about your reentry. You do not have to agree to a follow-up interview in order to complete the this interview.

If you choose to complete the interview, we will also ask if you 1) would consent to having the interview audio recorded, 2) if you would be willing to have quotes from your interviews with no information that would allow others to identify you shared in print journals and publications, and 3) if you would be willing to allow having parts of audio recording with no information that would allow others to identify you (except by the sound of your voice) to be uploaded to online academic journals that allow readers to listen to quotes from the interview in addition to reading them. You can choose to decline any of these additional requests while still agreeing to complete the interview.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
We do not expect any risks to subjects for participating. You may experience minimal distress from recalling any negative experiences related to your reentry. If particular topics or questions raise emotional or other personal issues, you can simply choose not to answer certain survey or interview questions or you may stop participating in the study. If the interview takes place at a public location, there is the chance that your responses may be overheard by other people not involved in the research project. If you feel uncomfortable sharing a response during the interview, you may ask to skips questions or stop the interview at any time.

Participant's initials: _____ Date: _____   Page 1 of 4

UD IRB Approval from 08/28/2015 to 04/14/2016

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS?

You will not benefit directly from taking part in this research beyond the small monetary compensation that will be provided. However, you may find it beneficial to have the opportunity to have your experiences documented and shared in order to provide a greater understanding of the day-to-day experience of reentry and the different factors that may make reentry an easier or more difficult process. Additionally, it is hoped that findings from the study will be shared with academics as well as policy-makers in order to help better inform reentry policy formation or reform.

HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY BE MAINTAINED?

We will make every effort to keep all research records that identify you confidential to the extent permitted by law. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

The prison warden and other DOC staff are invited to evaluate manuscripts of the prison research prior to publication. The researcher and DOC understand that the researcher is required to keep all individual information confidential, no names or other identifiable information will be included in any publications.

After three years, the de-identified (no personal information included) data files will be deleted using special software that makes sure no traces of the data are left on the computer.

The audio recordings will be transcribed by the principle investigator, deleting any identifying information. De-identified transcripts will be stored in qualitative data analysis software for analysis.

All electronic files will be immediately downloaded from the audio recorder and stored on a password protected computer. Only study personnel will hear the audio recordings.

Recordings will be erased within ten days of transcription. After three years, the de-identified data files will be deleted using special software that makes sure no traces of the data are left on the computer.

No identifying information will be included with any results or interview quotes that are reported.

Your research records may be viewed by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board, but the confidentiality of your records will be protected to the extent permitted by law. I am required by Delaware State law to report any instances of child abuse that may be shared with me during during our interview session to the appropriate officials.

WILL THERE BE ANY COSTS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH?

There are no costs associated with participating in the study.

WILL THERE BE ANY COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION?

You will receive $10.00 cash for participating in the interview. If for any reason you choose to stop the interview early, you will not be penalized and will still receive compensation for your participation.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Taking part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this research. If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. If you decide not to participate or if you decide to stop taking part in the research, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with the University of Delaware. IMPORTANT: Participation in the research will have no effect on your supervision conditions. Participation is completely voluntary and not related to any decisions related to your supervision or service needs.

Participant's initials: _____ Date: _____   Page 2 of 4

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WHO SHOULD YOU CALL IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the Principal Investigator Ashley Kilmer at (302) 283-9923.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board at 302-831-2137.

You have been informed about the study's purpose, procedures, possible risks and benefits. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and those questions have been answered. You may keep this copy of the consent form.

CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

I have read and understand the information provided in this form (or it has been read to me), and I agree to participate in the interview portion of this project.

_____   _____

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE   DATE

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

I **DO** consent to having my interview audio recorded for the purpose of data analysis.

Initials_____ Date_____

I **DO NOT** consent to having my interview audio recorded for the purpose of data analysis.

Initials_____ Date_____

CONSENT FOR USING INTERVIEW REPONSES

I **DO** consent to having parts of the interview with no information that would allow others to identify me included in academic journal publications of the study's research findings.

Initials_____ Date_____

I **DO NOT** consent to having parts of the interview with no information that would allow others to identify me included in academic journal publications of the study's research findings.

Initials_____ Date_____

CONSENT FOR USING AUDIO CLIPS OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES

I **DO** consent to having audio files using my actual voice (with no information that would allow others to identify me, except by my voice) included in online journal publications of the study's research findings.

Initials_____ Date_____

I **DO NOT** consent to having audio files using my actual voice (with no information that would allow others to identify me, except by my voice) included in online journal publications of the study's research findings.

Initials_____ Date_____

Participant's initials: _____ Date: _____   Page 3 of 4

CONSENT TO BE CONTACTED FOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

I **DO** consent to being contacted for a possible follow-up interview to give updates about your reentry experience

Initials_____ Date_____

I **DO NOT** consent to being contacted for a possible follow-up interview to give updates about your reentry experience

Initials_____ Date_____

Participant's initials: _____ Date: _____   Page 4 of 4