

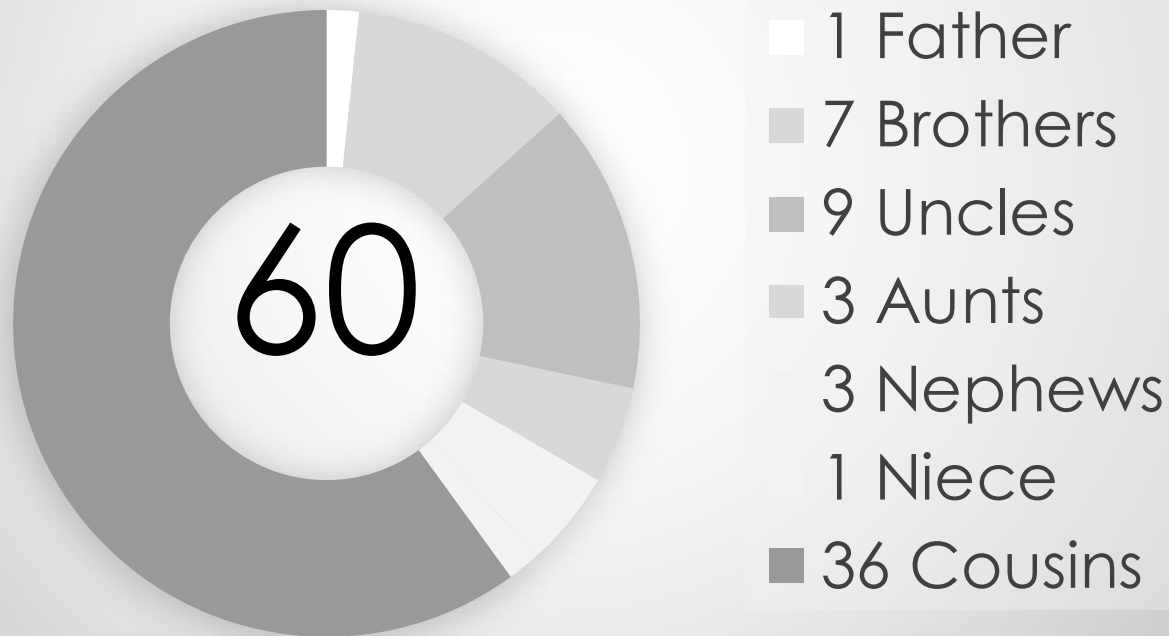
A Qualitative Analysis of the Lived Experiences of African American Fathers' Struggle with Reentry, Recidivism, and Reunification

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60 Reasons Why

Relatives that Experienced Incarceration



Problem Statement

African American fathers who participate in prison reentry programs continue to struggle with the 3 R's more than any other group of fathers.

Recidivism
eentry
eunification

Significance of Study

- United States has approximately 2.3 million individuals in correctional facilities (Prison Policy Initiative, 2017).
- 1.1 million are fathers (NRC Children and Families of the Incarcerated, 2014).

More than the prison population of:

Finland



India



Argentina



Canada



Lebanon



Japan



Germany



Israel



England



...COMBINED

Literature

SUMMARY

- The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (Coates, 2015).
- African American fathers participate in prison reentry programs more than any other ethnic group (Sanders, 2016; Fathers.org, 2016).
- **2.7** million children have a parent in jail or prison (Reilly, 2013).
- **767, 400** are African American and **91** percent of them have incarcerated fathers (The Urban Institute, 2015; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010; Christian, 2009).

GAPS

Failed to identify:

- Reasons for increased recidivism and reentry rates **despite** participating in reentry programs
- Underlying factors that serve as barriers for African American fathers and their families post-release.

Historical Plight of African Americans and Confinement

Slavery



1619

Black Codes



1865

Jim Crow



1877

War on
Drugs



1980's

Mandatory
Minimums



1990's

3 Strikes



1990's

Theoretical Framework

AFRICAN AMERICAN OFFENDING

- African American offending is related to the injustices that have occurred as a result of racial oppression and subordination (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011).

FAMILY SYSTEMS

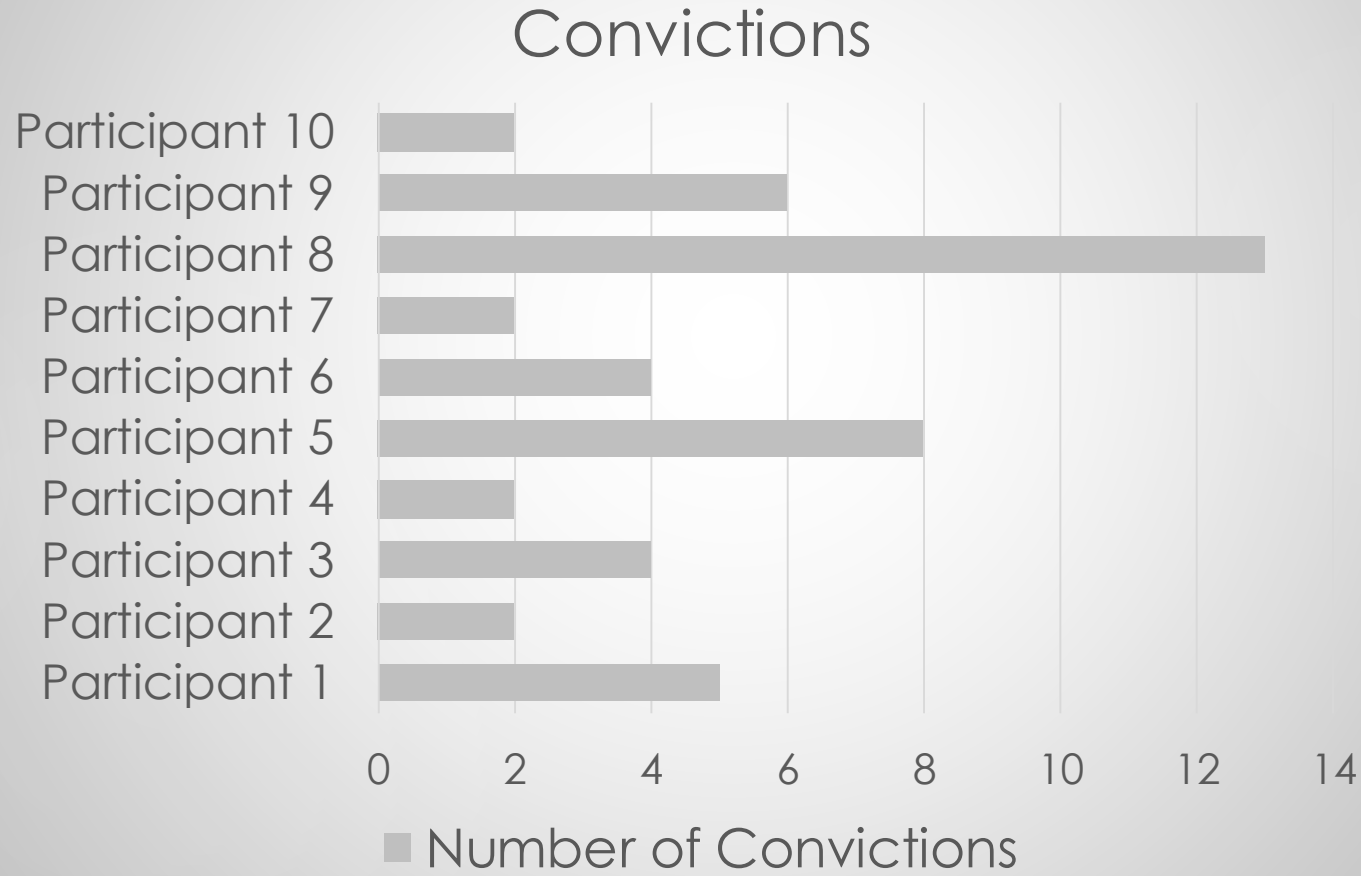
- Individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit (Bowen Center for the Study of Family, 2000).

Research Questions

- RQ#1: Why do African American fathers continue to struggle with reentry, recidivism, and reunification after participating in prison reentry programs?
- RQ#2: What is the lived experience of African American fathers who are reintegrating back into society and their families post-release?

Research Sample

N = 10



Research Methodology

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

- Understanding the universal experience through the interview of subjects (Kumar, 2012).
- In-depth descriptions (Kumar, 2012).
- Subjectivity (Manen, 1990).

DATA COLLECTION

- Non-random sampling-purposive.
- 13 question demographic questionnaire.
- 16 semi-structured interview questions.
- Interviews were conducted and manually transcribed by researcher.

Data Analysis



- Data was analyzed for emerging patterns and themes.
- Codes were created and organized in three categories:
 - Thematic
 - Descriptive
 - Analytic
- Data was interpreted by identifying similarities, differences, themes, and relationships.

Findings

Trauma	Self Identification	Reentry	Reunification	Recidivism
Stress	Institutionalization	Resources	Relationship with child's caregiver	Post-release environment
Generational Abuse and Abandonment	Criminalization	Accountability	Parenting, before, during, and after incarceration	Outlook on Criminal Justice System
Family Membership and Belonging		Employment		
Violence		Housing		

Findings



1.) Trauma

- *P#10: I went to alcohol and drugs because I was trying to get over a lot of things, like finding my brother dead in the house when I was 10. My mother and father left us in the house to die. First, my father left then my mother left. My mother was always a church-going woman. When she would come home, my daddy used to beat her up. My daddy will hold her down and pour liquor in her mouth- make her drink. Over the years, she just gave in and drank more than him.*



Findings

2.) Self-Identification

-  P#3: *I saw a couple of friends from around the neighborhood. I was pretty much in a safe haven. With me it was kind of like, I'm right at home.*
-  P#10: *I never been a thief, but when you want that drug to satisfy yourself you will do anything. I never have been a real criminal, but during that time I was more gangsta and thought that I could get away with it. I wound up not getting away with it.*

Findings

3.) Reentry



- P#5: *So it's like every time I go through South Florida and I want to take a trade they send you to a prison where the trade is but it ain't no trade there, it was there.*



- P#6: *I'm going to look for an apartment with my daughter, which I never did in my life. I don't understand how to get an apartment because I been living with my mom.*



Findings

4.) Reunification

- *P#5: I have to become their friend again before I can do the father work. They seen me a couple of times incarcerated but that's only when they started to do something wrong.*
- *P#2: Awe man, we strangers. Mothers took them the other way. My daughters believe everything their mother's say. Before I came down here, I got to deal with them a lil bit but after then I had one that used to call me every week but she stopped calling me. It hadn't bothered me real bad because I done learned to be by myself.*

Findings

5.) Recidivism

-  P#9: *You can have the best intentions in the world but when you are accustomed to a certain lifestyle and you not getting the money it's hard, it's real hard. The drug game is addictive-the money get to be addictive.*
-  P#3: *You have like loyal guys you grew up with they gonna come and show you love - we call it breaking bread. They gonna come and give you \$3-400, some drugs.*

Implications for Social Work

Policy:

- **More social workers should be an integral part of legislative action.** Social worker's involvement in the process of public policy development can help the justice system provide more effective services to the offender and their families.

Practice:

- Practitioners should **implement a specialized therapeutic approach** that focuses on coping, trauma, and parenting so that treatment becomes an instrument in preventing future criminal behavior.

Implications for Social Work

Research:

- **More qualitative studies** so that the fathers can have the opportunity to express their concerns and fears about reentry, recidivism, and reunification.

Education:

- **Family and child welfare courses should be revised** to include trauma associated with incarceration, intervention, prevention, and rehabilitation for individuals and families affected by incarceration.

Discussion

Discussion

- Endured chronic unaddressed trauma, which gave tremendous insight into why they struggle with the **3R's**.
- Prison reentry programs heightened their expectations for post-release.
- Programs did not prepare them for the difficult reality of reintegrating back into their families and society.

Observations

- Voluntarily showed pictures of their children.
- Expressed that their participation would help break generational incarceration in their families.

Limitations of Study

Sample size

Instrument

Personal biases

Conclusion

The **10** participants spent a combined **79** years in prison.

- This study provides evidence that African American fathers continue to struggle with the **3R's** after participating in prison reentry programs because of:
 - **Unaddressed chronic trauma**
 - **Distorted worldview**
 - **Systematic racialized legislation**
- It is the recommendation of this researcher that social workers, persons affected by incarceration, politicians, and criminologists **create more evidence-based programs that address trauma, self-identification issues, and legislation.**



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THANK YOU