

The Male Self and Inmate Assimilation: Decreasing Recidivism

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Abstract: *The number of American prison inmates incarcerated in the criminal justice system impacts society both economically and socially. However, the criminal justice system has fallen far short of the rehabilitation goal to facilitate the effective reintegration of male inmates into society and promote acceptable social behaviors upon re-entry. A constructive look at the needs of the criminal justice system and those of the criminal justice population points towards the urgency for increased identification and implementation of best practices. This paper identifies that cognitive behavioral therapies integrated within a safe, less punitive environment better enable this gender-specific population to increase positive self- concept, commit to an affirmative self-identity, and look towards productive societal interactions for authentic self-presentation efforts and increase social assimilation upon release.*

Keywords List: *Criminal Justice, Prison, Reentry, Recidivism, Self-Concept, Self-Identity, Self-Presentation*

Criminal Justice

The American criminal justice system has long held the tradition of rehabilitation, incapacitation, retribution, and deterrence regarding the criminal justice population (Cotton, 2000; Keller, Oswald, Stucki, & Gollwitzer, 2010). Historically, the hope of the criminal justice system was to separate the individual from society and offer a setting where one might learn how to become a productive member of society, and then release the individual to society with new skills to engage the public appropriately (Miller, 2012). The penal system was conceptualized as a place where social deviants could learn how to appropriately engage in society and acquire a commitment to socially acceptable behavior patterns (McClelland, 2011). However, this reformation ideal has fallen far short of the lofty corrections goal of the past. As the “tough on crime” stance surfaced in the 1980s, the rise in the numbers associated with the prison population left society wondering if criminal rehabilitation was at all attainable (Cone, 2004; Drum, 2017). The mass incarceration era with its overcrowded prisons has caused the focus of prison administration to shift from rehabilitation to detention operations and issues of overcrowding and limited resources (Basile, 2005; Kreager, Young, Haynie, Bouchard, Schaefer, Zajac, 2017; MacKenzie, 2013). With the shift in focus of modern-day prisons from correcting those who have been judged with criminal behavior towards a focus on incapacitation, retribution, and deterrence leaves the public to wonder if inmates will have the capacity to reintegrate with society upon release from incarceration.

In the United States, the center of attention is predominantly on the considerable number of inmates held in prisons, concerns associated with housing, and institutional and public safety. Additionally, meager state and federal funding for the Department of Corrections (Lawrence, 2014) has turned the criminal justice goals towards staying on budget and offering staff relief in an overcrowded prison system where inmates far outnumber correctional officers. It appears that the rehabilitation process has taken a less significant role, as limited resources have enabled prisons to become arenas for inmates to learn an increased command of criminal behavior and proficiency in criminal interpersonal practices (Allender & Marcell, 2003; Foster, 1982; Justice & Meares, 2014; Morenoff & Harding, 2014).

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This paper seeks to identify the self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation related to the male prison population and offers environmental theories for best practice efforts when working with this gender-specific population. Self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation are interconnected aspects of an individual's sense of self.

Understanding the interrelation between self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation is of utmost importance for males, as it impacts various aspects of their personal and social lives, including their mental health, relationships, and overall well-being.

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, encompassing their beliefs, attitudes, abilities, and values (Rosenberg, 1979). It plays a significant role in shaping males' self-esteem and self-worth, influencing how they perceive their strengths, weaknesses, and overall competence. This, in turn, affects their motivation, behavior, and achievements across different domains (Gecas, 1982).

Self-identity relates to an individual's subjective experience of being a specific person and their identification with social groups, roles, and attributes. It includes elements such as gender identity, cultural or ethnic identity, and occupational identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Self-identity is crucial for males as it helps shape their sense of belonging and provides a framework for understanding themselves within the broader social context. It influences their values, priorities, aspirations, as well as their social interactions and relationships (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

Self-presentation refers to how individuals present themselves to others, encompassing behaviors, appearance, and communication style. It involves managing impressions and expressing oneself in alignment with desired social norms, expectations, and goals (Goffman, 1959). For males, self-presentation is particularly significant due to societal norms and expectations surrounding masculinity. Traditional ideals of masculinity often dictate that males should be strong, independent, and stoic. These norms can impact how males express their emotions, seek help, and form connections with others (Connell, 1995).

The interrelation among self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation is crucial for males as it shapes their understanding of themselves, their behavior, and their interactions with others. Societal expectations and stereotypes regarding masculinity can lead to rigid or narrow definitions of male identity, causing individuals to conform to these ideals even if they don't align with their authentic selves. This internal conflict can result in self-esteem issues, difficulties in forming meaningful relationships, and overall dissatisfaction. By comprehending the interplay between these concepts, males can develop a more nuanced and authentic sense of self, fostering healthier self-esteem, greater self-acceptance, and more fulfilling relationships (Mahalik et al., 2003).

It is important to note that the interrelation between self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation applies not only to males but also to individuals of all genders. However, there are specific aspects that are often discussed in relation to males due to social and cultural factors. These include masculine norms and expectations, emotional expression and vulnerability, relationship building, body image and physical appearance, and the influence of intersectionality on experiences of masculinity (Levant & Richmond, 2008).

Additionally, the concepts of self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation are relevant to understanding the experiences of males within the prison population. Imprisonment introduces new labels and stigmatizing identities, disrupting individuals' self-concept and potentially leading to diminished self-worth and loss of identity. The prison environment can impact self-identity as inmates adapt to the prison subculture and establish new connections, while also experiencing pressures to conform to specific identities within the facility. Self-presentation becomes crucial for survival in prison, often tied to notions of masculinity, strength, and control. The challenging conditions of confinement can also affect the mental health of incarcerated males, leading to psychological distress and the development of coping strategies related to self-presentation (Irwin, 2005).

Recognizing the influence of the prison system on self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation is essential. Efforts to support the well-being and rehabilitation of incarcerated males should consider these factors, aiming to promote positive self-concept, healthy self-identity formation, and adaptive self-presentation strategies. This approach might contribute to successful reintegration into society after release and reduce the likelihood of recidivism, or reincarceration within three years of release (<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/corrections/recidivism>).

As the United States looks toward a future with large scores of criminal justice inmates spending longer periods of time in prisons across the nation (Urban Institute, 2017), society must look ahead to future concerns of overcrowding within a penal system with increased budgetary needs and limited resources. The nation must be cognizant of the impact released offenders have on society, and by overlooking this population the corrections process has necessarily given up the goal of rehabilitation and re-integration efforts, and essentially has enabled the ex-offender to continue the behaviors that lead to incarceration.

There are many variables which influence the inmate while incarcerated and then continue upon release. Length of incarceration, social supports, mental and behavioral health resources, and legal and policy implications are but a few of the variables that appear to affect the individual while incarcerated and perpetuate a trajectory of continued incarceration and recidivism (Western & Pettit, 2010; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001; Petersilia, 2003; Visher & Travis, 2003; Uggen, Manza, & Thompson, 2006; La Vigne, Visher, & Yahner, 2004).

According to Gonzales, Dawkins, and Hokansan (1979), recidivism has historically been a core issue of concern for correctional systems because of the vulnerability of offenders when released into environments which tolerate deviant behavior. Keene, Smoyer, and Blankenship (2018) state that recidivism continues to be a concern for society due to the large scores of inmates who are released into society without the opportunity to assimilate productively. According to a 2005 study conducted by Durose, Cooper, and Snyder (2014), over 75% of prisoners who were released from state prisons were re-arrested within five years. The overwhelming number of ex-offenders released from correctional facilities who re-offend is of great concern for society and points to the need for increased evidence based best practices concerning rehabilitation and reintegration.

With the largest prison population in the world, the United States incarceration rates have remained relatively stable since 2000 (Austin, Mohr, & Prell, 2018; Walker, 2016). Without a comprehensive approach to address prison overcrowding and recidivism, the prison population will not diminish, and if crime increases then the prison population will also rise. In an effort to decrease the number of individuals held within prisons across the nation, society must be cognizant of the needs of inmates to engage in a rehabilitation process which has the potential to decrease recidivism rates. According to the United States Department of Justice (2022), at year-end 2021, the total number of individuals incarcerated included 83,349 women and 1,120,973 men. The numbers tell us that men are overrepresented as compared to women within the criminal justice system. Men appear to be overrepresented in an overpopulated environment. Examining the variables that influence the criminal justice population, in conjunction with the correctional environment, and considering internal factors which promote positive behavior such as mental health, individual motivation, and cognitive processing might open the discourse for solutions concerning the incarcerated individual and opportunities for productive reintegration upon release. With this discourse, the Department of Corrections can then come closer to the rehabilitation of inmates and their subsequent appropriate interaction with society and its members when discharged.

Self-Concept

A discussion of the self-concept of the incarcerated male must include the self-evaluation associated with traits and characteristics as perceived by the individual. It would be negligent to discuss the self-concept without recognizing the element of self-esteem as it pertains to the male inmate and impacts behavior (Cassidy, O'Conner, Howe, Warden, 2004). The self-concept is the sum total of beliefs that people have about themselves, and self-esteem is the overall appraisal of one's worth. This self-appraisal can be positive or negative depending on the construction of beliefs that guide the processing of self-relevant information and the emotional evaluation one has placed on these constructs. The constitution of the self that guides information processing includes learned beliefs (Andersson, 2017), attitudes (Simourd & Olver, 2002), and opinions perceived to be true about the subjective self (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2008). Mazar, Amir, and Arielly (2008) assert that self-concept maintenance is an important component of the decision-making process, especially when associations with antisocial peers is a strong correlate with offending behavior (Cochran, Jones, Jones, & Sellers, 2016) and the enticement for deviant behavior is considerable (Mazar, Amir, & Arielly, 2008). According to Rational Choice Theory, when making a decision, the individual relies on the internal value system, weighing the costs and benefits of behavior (Scott, 2000). The self-concept is associated with many self-relevant variables and seeks to reflect the norms and values of society (Grecas, 1982). This appears to offer a discrepancy between the self-concept, reflecting the norms of the larger society, and recidivist behavior.

The self-esteem, or the subjective appraisal of the self, evaluates the maintenance of self-concept (Grecas, 1982). When making decisions about behavior, individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of behavior and may rely on external motivators when deciding if the benefits outweigh the risks of socially unacceptable behavior. People with low self-esteem tend to ignore the way others perceive them and the congenial feelings associated with socially acceptable behavior (Marigold, Holmes, Wood, & Cavallo, 2014). Mazar et al. (2008) posit that individuals with little value of self reject external positive perceptions as a factor in self-concept which may result in a deeper connection with negative self-appraisals. Simourd and Olver (2002) suggest that there are four factors influencing criminal behavior: (a) reflecting generic criminal attitudes, (b) specific attitudes about the law, (c) generic rationalizations consistent with criminal subcultures, and (d) criminally oriented self-concept. They further assert that there are eight thinking styles that include critical thinking errors perpetuating criminal conduct. These critical thinking errors are Mollification or rationalization in favor of norm violation; Cutoff, or the lack of internal restraint to criminal behavior; Entitlement, or the sense of privilege by course of control; Power Orientation or manifest aggression; Sentimentality, or reparation for deviant behavior; Super Optimism, or an overconfidence in one's abilities; Cognitive Indolence, or passive thinking; and Discontinuity, or lack of self-discipline.

The criminal self-concept is established when the individual personalizes a criminally oriented nature. Baskin (2006) suggests that an important factor of developing self-concept is the comparison of one's abilities with the abilities of others. Those who are incarcerated are surrounded by the variables associated with interaction within the criminal justice system and comparing the self to others involved with criminal conduct reasonably increases comparisons based on criminal attitudes and characteristics. The self-esteem then evaluates these traits, attitudes, and characteristics and compares how one perceives the self and how one would like to perceive the self. Subsequently, the individual places a value on the appraisal between the actual and the ideal as either having a high or low subjective value. Individuals rate their experience associated with each attribute by assessing actual behavior and experience, and compare them to those of a self-determined ideal standard (i.e., religion, gang code, correctional officers, the warden, parents or family members, etc.). If the overall judgment is positive, then the individual is said to have high self-esteem, if the overall evaluation is negative, the individual is said to have low self-esteem. High and low self-esteem impacts the self-concept and influences the way the individual perceives the self (Luhur, 2005). The criminal self-concept holds attitudes, beliefs, and opinions that are conducive to a criminal environment, and believes these to be important factors ascribed to by the self. The self-esteem appraises these attitudes, beliefs, and opinions against the actual behavior engaged in by the individual, and evaluate the behavior based on whether the behavior is acceptable in order to maintain the criminal self-concept that is common among inmates within the criminal justice system (Simourd & Olver, 2002).

One strategy for developing a healthy self-concept is to start a regular program of physical activity (Wagner, McBride, & Crouse, 1999). Being a male (Ferguson, Rueda, Cruz, Ferguson, & Fritz, 2008), in an environment that not only tolerates but promotes criminal behavior, and having a negative self-concept is conducive to an environment wrought with aggression (Wagner et al., 1999). Cathartic theory states that a buildup of aggression requires a release of energy, preferably physical energy, using acceptable outlets.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis introduced by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) suggests that the individual who behaves in an acceptably aggressive manner would decrease further acts of inappropriate aggression in reaction to frustration by purging the need for physical release through positive activity. When one is not incarcerated there are a variety of activities that one is able to choose in an effort to reframe the self-concept. Though the options are limited in the prison setting, a program of regular physical activity could be achieved through appropriate means such as prison approved athletic activities or physically demanding inmate work assignments such as landscaping, agriculture work, or construction. Engaging physical activity to release aggression might allow the male prison inmate the opportunity to develop socially acceptable behaviors that align better with societal norms by enhancing the male self-concept as opposed to the criminal self-concept.

Self-Identity

Erikson (1963) posits that the formation of identity occurs in adolescence after one successfully progresses through the first four stages of psychosocial development. The first stage, Trust versus Mistrust occurs from infant to 18 months and the person either builds trust or the lack of trust in social relationships. The formation of trust or mistrust in social relationships has implications for identity formation in later stages. The second stage, Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt occurs from 18 months to three years and accentuates personal control and the establishment of self. Shame is utilized to encourage one to comply with rules and self-doubt encourages one to strive for mastery. The third stage, Initiative versus Guilt occurs from three to five years and highlights purpose and social approval. Initiative refers to asserting the self and taking appropriate risks, and guilt allows one to build self-control and perceive the conscience. The fourth stage, Industry versus Inferiority occurs from five to 13 years and emphasizes self-esteem founded upon productivity. One develops competence and mastery based on community expectations and if not, one will develop feelings of inadequacy. Then, in the fifth stage of development which occurs from 13 to 21 years is Identity versus Role Confusion. In this stage, the individual utilizes his peers and the social setting to discover who he is and what he is capable of becoming. Erikson (1966) further states that one who has not successfully resolved the crisis in the previous four stages of psychosocial development will be unlikely to resolve the identity crisis in the fifth stage. If the identity crisis is resolved successfully, the individual develops fidelity which is characterized by veracity, authenticity, and a sense of duty in relationship to others. According to Erickson's theory of psychosocial development, the individual who has not successfully progressed through the Identity versus Role Confusion stage might experience challenges regarding direction, stability, or sense of belonging. If the individual does not resolve the first five stages successfully, he will be at a loss concerning the sixth stage which is Intimacy versus Isolation, and occurs from 21 to 39 years. In this stage one would be able to forge stable, deeply connected relationships with others. When one does not resolve the crisis in this stage, the result is an inability to build connections with others, to which the prison environment appears well suited. Needless to say, if the psychosocial crisis in the previous developmental stages is not resolved successfully, then it is implausible that the individual will be prepared for, or equipped to, resolve the crisis in the remaining developmental stages. The seventh stage, Generativity versus Stagnation occurs from 40 to 65 years and highlights productivity and purpose. In this stage, one fears inactivity and insignificance which may have implications for the aging prison population due to their spending a majority of their life behind bars (Kreager et al., 2017). The eighth stage, Ego Integrity versus Despair occurs from 65 years and lasts throughout the remainder of the life span (Erikson, 1966). In this stage, the individual is focused on self-reflection and the contributions one has made to society. This might explain one process of the aging prison population and a reason that older male inmates take on the role of mentor to younger male inmates in an effort to promote community well-being in the contemporary prison social order (Kreager et al., 2017).

The psychosocial developmental stage of the individual has implications for cognitive processing and helps shape personal perception. According to White and Jones (1996), identity is an unconscious ideology concerning the self that guides individual problem-solving, decision making, and planning. Berzonsky (1992) asserts that experiences are interpreted and integrated through this ideology of the self, then subsequently formulate the structure and composition of behavioral strategies that manage problem-solving. Berzonsky (1988, 1990) further postulates that there are three styles of identity that guide unique decision-making, coping, and problem-solving strategies. These identity styles are designated Information Oriented, Norm Oriented and Diffuse Oriented. According to Marcia (1966), identity status is measured by levels of exploration and commitment. There are four identity status categories: Moratorium, Achieved, Diffuse, and Foreclosed. Those who are in the identity status category of Moratorium are seeking a focus, and those who are Achieved adopt commitments after a period of Moratorium. Both of these identity status categories are Information Oriented identity styles in which the individual seeks answers on which to base personal commitments and focus. Individuals in this category have likely resolved the Identity crisis in Erikson's (1966) fifth stage of psychosocial development. Individuals who have a Foreclosed identity status base commitments and beliefs on those which others deem important (Marcia, 1966). These individuals have a Norm Oriented identity style with a focus on the normative expectations of significant others and have most likely not resolved the Identity Crisis as evidenced by their enmeshment regarding an external concentration. Individuals who have a Diffuse identity status have no focus or goal with which to commit because they have not explored values or options. These individuals strive to avoid confronting challenges and have more than likely not resolved the Identity Crisis.

Imprisoned men frequently face challenges in maintaining their previous sense of self because of the negative stigma associated with being in prison (Irwin, 2013). It is important to recognize the impact of societal expectations and cultural norms related to masculinity on shaping male identities (Collica, 2015). Therefore, self-identity is an important theory with respect to the male prison population. It is also important to note that deviant behavior covaries with identity development (Jones, 1992). Identity formation starts

in adolescence and continues to develop throughout the lifespan, with particular attention to identity in early adulthood which allows the individual to form connections with others (Adams & Montemayor, 1988). During the exploratory fifth stage of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963), the male adolescent might benefit from developing an adaptive identity style which might help stave off a criminal self-identity due to possessing flexibility and the perception of decreased restriction. For those who have adapted their self to an identity which allows or promotes the individual to engage in criminal behavior, it is suggested by White and Jones (1996) that one work through stage-specific issues to better prepare for coping, problem-solving, and decision-making in a socially acceptable manner. Transforming self-identity has been linked to generating interventions within the criminal justice population to promote positive behavior choices and reduce the recidivism rate (MacKenzie, 2013). Inmates with a Normative Orientation might benefit from an intervention that would (a) weaken the commitment to unconventional values, attitudes, and behavior patterns; (b) structure exploration of conventional values, attitudes, and behavior patterns; and (c) foster commitment to conventional methods of promoting positive values, attitudes, and behavior choices. Interventions for inmates with a Diffuse Orientation might include activities that would structure meaningful exploration and commitment to conventional attitudes, values, and behavior patterns. Diffuse Oriented inmates might also benefit from the development of skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, and goal setting.

Prison programs that address identity style might get the most benefit from an intervention designed for Information Oriented inmates. This population is the most likely to use prison programs effectively, lead a productive lifestyle upon release, and are the least likely to recidivate (White & Jones, 1996). Information Oriented inmates have advanced problem-solving, decision-making, and coping skills in order to use prison intervention methods effectively, adapt methods of intervention, and engage in socially acceptable behaviors. This is not to say that correctional programs for inmates that do not possess an Information Oriented identity style are without merit. The implementation of cognitive behavioral interventions with the criminal justice population has the most support concerning positive outcomes with the reduction of recidivism (Andrews et al., 1990; MacKenzie, 2013; Simourd & Olver, 2002). Distance theory contends that an inmate must execute a change in self-identity away from that of a criminal and towards that of a non-criminal, before assuming prison programming (MacKenzie, 2013). Consequently, the Information Oriented individual is in the best possible position to accept environmental opportunities directed towards cognitive adaptations.

Upon release from incarceration, inmates will return to communities where they will participate as relational, interdependent beings living in neighborhoods, communities, and society (Markus, 2008). Therefore, the inmate might benefit from adopting cognitions that allow him to engage correctional intervention strategies and make adaptations for community reintegration upon release. As inter-relational beings, individuals are dependent upon others for behavior interpretation and adaptation. Self-presentation is a means by which behavior is defined through a relational process which is dependent upon the interpretation given by the actor and the interpretation given by those perceiving the behavior. Self-presentation is an integral part of living in a community setting and increasing one's capacity to present the self as a non-criminal is essential to decreasing recidivism.

Self-Presentation

Self-presentation is the manner in which one puts forth effort towards influencing the perceptions of others and one's own perception of self (Kassin et al., 2008). Self-presentation has an obvious role in the male criminal justice population as one integrates the self into the subculture and assumes a social role within the context of the institution. The individual identifies personal characteristics of the self and evaluates these characteristics with respect to the discrepancy between actual and ideal behavior. Self-presentation is exhibited with attention to modifications to behavior in order to present the self in the most favorable light.

The person is a social being, and as such he is exclusively able to interpret social situations and choose behavior to present to others and to his self. Two theories of self-presentation are Strategic Self-Presentation (Goffman, 1959) and Self Verification (Swann, 1983). Strategic Self-Presentation is behavior that is implemented in a calculated fashion for presenting the self in a manner that attempts to gain influence over others. There are two goals associated with Strategic Self Presentation: Integration and Self-Promotion. Integration favors particular behavior with a desire to get along with others and acquire respect, while Self-Promotion is motivated by the desire for one to get ahead. Self Verification suggests that people select behavior that invites acceptable feedback that coincides with the perception of the self (Gómez, Morales, Huici, Gaviria, & Jiménez, 2007; Kassin et al., 2008). Self-Presentation induces the effort of the individual presenting with conscious and unconscious influences related to thinking, emotions, biology, culture, immediate environment, expectation, and a myriad of other variables connected to hierarchy of the setting and environmental cues. Self-Presentation may be authentic or misleading. In the correctional facility, the administration is less concerned with the motives influencing inmate behavior because motives are not an important factor when considering inmate adherence to the rules. The punitive nature of the institution is concerned with inmate control and administering sanctions for policy infractions in the prison setting, not with the motivations for the inmate concerning Self-Presentation (Medrano, Ozkan, & Morris, 2017). The punishing nature of the criminal justice system focuses on inmate behavior, and rewards and punishments are meted out accordingly. Inmate motivation is not scrutinized nor considered in this process (Griffin, 2006). The predominant goal of the criminal justice system is to house inmates and control the criminal justice population. The prison system is not concerned with motivating factors associated with deviant behavior. Prison administration concerns itself with identifying behavior in opposition to the correctional facility policy and requires accountability and punishment for behavior infractions. This corrections procedure is made known to the inmate evaluating the costs and benefits of behavior before a behavior has been chosen and implementation ensues.

Kassin and colleagues (2008) suggest that individuals who care about what others think typically use this as a factor in the evaluation process when considering their cost/benefit analysis to determine behavior. However, according to Bowlby (1969, 1973),

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Attachment Theory suggests that the way one received care as a child from significant caregivers, would impact expectations for care in adulthood, and would influence individual behavior in relation to others. The four attachment styles are Secure, Dismissive, Avoidant, and Pre-Occupied. Individuals who have established Secure attachments with caregivers will actively seek out support from others with the expectation of receiving appropriate care in adult relationships. Individuals who have experienced rejection from caregivers tend not to actively seek out supports because the expectation for care does not exist. This Dismissive attachment bond teaches the individual that self-reliance is valued above all else and that coping on one's own is an estimable character trait. Individuals who have developed Avoidant attachments will not seek out close contact with others in an effort to protect the self from the disappointment that inevitably comes with close relationships, though the desire for close contact might exist (Simpson, Winterheld, Rholes, & Orina, 2007). Individuals with a Pre-Occupied attachment style value others more highly than the self and conceivably experience challenges in regard to emotional regulation and setting boundaries (Broderick & Blewitt, 2006). The influence of such caregiver attachment impacts the evaluation of the self, thereby influencing the Self-Presentation of the individual. As a rule, the male prison population does not value seeking out supports or close contacts (Gilbert, 2002), and inmates are highly reliant on their own capacity to engage the institution and other prisoners with the motivation to gain respect and get ahead in order to stay alive or remain under the administrations' radar in an effort to avoid trouble. Individuals who esteem others more highly than the self will most likely present with Self-Verification behaviors because of the motivation for group acceptance and the perception of the self as suitable as a result of the reactions of others. In the penal system where the presentation of masculinity and autonomy is highly valued (MacKenzie, 2013), this behavior is typically seen as a weakness by other inmates.

In the male prison environment where asking for help, seeking support, and talking about genuine feelings is often shunned, this may make it difficult to present an authentic self. However, authentic self-presentation involves less effort than a contrived inauthentic self-presentation. The ideal for the criminal justice system might be for the inmate to present in ways that would promote the policies and procedures of the institution. However, this does not agree with the criminal self-concept, the criminal attitude construct, nor does it address the lack of commitment to positive goals that would promote compliance with societal norms especially upon release. While in the prison subculture, inmates are socialized toward behavior choices. The climate of the prison culture utilizes reinforcements by both staff and other prisoners to direct inmate behavior. Behaviors that obviously side the inmate with the prison administration may alienate other prisoners whose norm it is to make behavior choices against authority. While residing in the institution, the individual must make self-presentation choices that encourage both staying under the radar of staff while getting along with or getting ahead of other inmates.

Environmental Influences

According to Markus (2008), empirical research supports that virtually all behavior requires and is dependent upon others. This would suggest that the behavior of the male correctional inmate is based upon context specific ideas and practices. According to Bandura (1973, 1983), Social Learning Theory suggests that social behavior processes are acquired and maintained by means of the socialization process and instigated through the influence of positive and negative models, aversive treatment, incentives, instructions, or personal beliefs. This theory suggests that behavior can be regulated by external rewards and punishments, vicarious reinforcements, and self-regulatory mechanisms, concluding that people behave in a manner that is acceptable to particular social conditions that are facilitated by historical, environmental, and social factors (Wagner, McBride, & Crouse, 1999). The growing body of literature associated with the prison subculture suggests that assimilation is affected by many factors (Davila-Centeno, 2016; Esperian, 2010; James, 2015; Zingraff, 1980). These include the structure of the institution, length of time incarcerated, time left to serve on sentence, the social role assumed by the inmate, quantity and quality of relations with those outside of the prison environment, inmate post-release expectations, alienation, inmate self-concept, and the degree to which the inmate experiences life satisfaction.

Prisonization occurs when one applies the inmate normative system to the self (Hyman, 1977). The Deprivation Model (Sykes, 1958) and the Importation Model (Irwin, 1970) are the two prevailing theories that apply to inmate prisonization. The Deprivation Model highlights institutional pressures and challenges of imprisonment, and the Importation Model emphasizes pre-institutional socialization and experiences. Since the 1950s these two theories have been researched (Zingraff, 1980) and more recently integrated for a more comprehensive understanding and foundation for explanatory purposes (Paterline & Orr, 2016). The deprivation model emphasizes the administrations' control over the inmate population and conveys a lack of inmate control over their environment and the self. The importation model suggests that the environment of the institution has similarities with pre-incarceration environments, which express similarities in overrepresentation of minorities, those with low socioeconomic status, and the status hierarchy concerning criminal behavior (Kreager et al., 2017; Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018). These commonalities of composition and social background influence the adaptation of the inmate to the normative system within the prison culture and the identification as an inmate within this system (*c.f.* Street, 1962 as cited in Zingraff, 1980). The structure of the institution which holds incarcerated individuals plays a role in the social and environmental context influencing the assimilation of the inmate to prison life. The philosophy of the institution, for the most part, determines the orientation of the inmate subculture.

There exist two types of institutional goals: (a) programming of inmates to identify challenges and successes associated with decreased recidivism, and (b) controlling inmates while in custody and awaiting release (Benson, 2003). The goals of the facility have implications for procedural rewards and punishments. Facilities with an emphasis on controlling the prison population will rely more heavily on punishments for noncompliance with administrative rules. Facilities that are treatment oriented generally offer more support for inmate behavior to conform to the rules and concentrate on increasing appropriate behavior.

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According to Bandura (1973), human behavior is influenced by the ramifications of potential action. Markus and Nurius (1986) agree with this position in that there is motivation to induce behavior by examining the possibility of different scenarios or possible selves and the consequences of such action if acted upon in a social setting. The expectant reward or punishment for behavior appears to influence actual (physical) behavior and probable (options for) behavior. Differential Association Theory posits that deviant behavior is learned through peer interaction and that this interaction influences the criminal identity and the adaptation of its values, motives, attitudes, and techniques (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Practitioners understand that all behavior has purpose and that there is a benefit to the actor in each chosen behavior. The personal perspective of the individual would dictate what he considers to be a beneficial behavior, whether positive or negative. The prison administration may perceive a particular behavior as negative according to societal norms; therefore, concentrate on employing reinforcements that reduce subsequent negative behavior. However, this same behavior may be viewed by the inmate as positive because the benefit of the said behavior meets the motivational goal of the inmate because other inmates may reward the behavior by reinforcements regarding integration or promotion. The increase in motivation for an inmate to gain reward, status, and reference from other prisoners, inversely relates to a decrease in looking towards legitimate society for these needs to be satisfied. This then inversely correlates with an increased progression towards the inmate normative system (Zingraff, 1980). One can then surmise that in the gender normative masculine culture of the male prison environment (Crewe, 2006) the more an inmate looks to other prisoners for reference, status, and rewards, the less the individual will look to legitimate society, and actively adopt the inmate normative system. This environment of perceived aggression-based interactions between the prisoner and others within the penal system might indicate a reliance on other prisoners for reinforcements, decreasing the desire for more legitimate societal reinforcements, and increasing the assumption of the inmate normative system of criminal self-concept, inmate self-identity, and individual presentation consistent with other prisoners rather than with prison administration goals and acceptable societal norms. Environmental factors within the penitentiary system have a profound impact on the male criminal justice population, both internally and interpersonally. The environment plays a significant role in shaping the behavioral outcomes of the incarcerated male.

Interventions

Decreasing budgets, more inmates sentenced to longer periods of time, high rates of recidivism, individual self-concept and self-esteem, and historical interpersonal experiences are important factors to consider when developing interventions for the male criminal justice population. As a result of warehousing individuals in custody, the ex-offender is woefully unprepared for acceptable societal interactions upon release. The ex-offender appears to be set up for recidivism because the criminal justice system has not offered the evidence based best practice programs that are imperative to social skill acquisition and social competence. The past ideas of locking the individual away and allowing the individual to sit in seclusion in the hopes that he will learn from his mistakes while utilizing harsh punishments and alienation from legitimate society, has not made progress in alleviating the problems associated with incarceration and recidivism. Prison administration methods might benefit from a combination of both inmate accountability and internal motivation towards pro-social behavior, because traditional punitive approaches appear to miss the mark concerning implications for effective practice within the contentious nature of the prison social setting. The criminal justice system must be cognizant of internal motivations as they relate to the environmental exchange of ideas, values, and options for behavior choices available to the administration, as well as the inmate.

The penal system, the family system, and the larger society could benefit from further dissertation in order to determine best practice methods to reduce recidivism and increase positive societal interplay concerning the released offender. Current research suggests that a focus on increased psychological health, autonomy, and social competence skills of the incarcerated offender might increase the ties between the prisoner and society, and decrease the likelihood of the adaptation of an inmate disposition committed to the inmate normative system (Carcedo, Lopez, Orgaz, Toth, Fernandez-Rouco, 2008). A convergence on offering services for treatment concerning rehabilitation processes (Molden & Dweck, 2006), structuring a more supportive and less punitive institutional model (Zingraff, 1980), and allowing for the interpersonal needs of male prison inmates (Carcedo et al., 2008) would go a long way towards relieving the challenges of continued incarceration and reduce recidivism costs.

A criminal justice system with an increased intention regarding the support of positive family bonds and legitimate social ties might also decrease the likelihood of inmate social isolation and alienation of the administration, and enable inmates to meet interpersonal needs and decrease the perception of powerlessness. Zingraff (1980) suggests that housing men and women in the same prison and allowing limited contact between them, sentencing convicted felons to prisons close to family members outside of prison, facilitating a process of easy interaction with whom the prisoner likes, and new corrections policy for inmate visitation practices might increase positive familial interaction and allow for increased psychological health and more positive interaction between the prisoner and the institution, as well as increase the positive interaction with the inmate and his family. Environmental reinforcements toward positive interplay with society would be supported by rewards for positive engagement. Inmates who are compliant with administrative norms, who demonstrate the internalization of the value of social contacts and the desire to positively engage, would receive rewards by increased intimate contact for following the rules. The benefit could be far-reaching for those inside and outside of the prison confines. This would support the idea of the importance of family ties and positive interaction with the institution, the family, and society. This strategy might also decrease the individual desire to look to other prisoners for support and reward, and decrease the likelihood of internalizing the inmate normative system.

Implications for Practice

The staggering number of inmates held within correctional facilities requires our attention with respect to our desire for decreased numbers and the promotion of pro-social behaviors within the criminal justice system and upon release. In an ever-advancing society, our concern must turn to consider the prison population for future research and practice efforts in an attempt to broaden the potential for decreased recidivism. The costs to society go far beyond the dollars allotted to house and control inmates. There are costs associated with the penal system, the family system, and society as a whole. If society fails to establish successful prevention programs designed to intervene in the first five stages of psychosocial development and implement these programs in the best possible course to deter youth from coming of age and entering the criminal justice system as adults, then we need to design better intervention programs for the prisoner to engage in for skill acquisition and the promotion of constructive societal interactions upon release.

Research shows that the most productive prisoner reintegration programs begin during incarceration and continue to support the criminal justice client upon discharge (James, 2015; Olson, Rozhon, & Powers, 2009). The criminal justice client is typically at risk for recidivism due to a lack of education and vocational skills, intellectual disability, and substance abuse. These deficits translate into decreased opportunities for employment and housing stability when released from custody. This would indicate a need to address basic education, vocational education, and cognitive skills development during incarceration to prepare the inmate for release and reintegration (Ripley, 1993; Vacca, 2004). According to Armstrong (2003), the treatment of caring for the social, moral, and behavioral needs of the inmate population substantially reduces recidivism and equips the inmate for reentry. Corrections facilities might provide reintegration intervention under less punitive conditions to address the physical activity, education, vocation, cognitive, social, moral, and substance abuse treatment needs of the inmate in an effort to decrease recidivism resulting in decreased prison overcrowding and decreased costs to society after the inmate is discharged. This seems like an imposing endeavor concerning the consequences of the systemic problem regarding the tough on crime, mass incarceration stance of punishing the offender from which this crisis emerged.

This issue is not unique to American correctional facilities and the Australian Institute of Criminology (2008) acknowledges that the lack of educational and vocational skills puts the offender population at increased risk to re-offend upon release from incarceration. The Australian criminal justice system has vocational education and training (VET) programs in place to support the criminal justice client with opportunities to engage effective reintegration intervention and prepare the inmate for release. Implementing the VET program is not without its challenges within Australian correctional facilities. These challenges include conflicting schedules with mandatory inmate programs, the preference of the prisoner to earn money through inmate work assignments, "inmate short sentences (under 12 months) and long waiting lists for courses, being transferred to another centre without much notice or being released early" (p. 1). Another challenge of implementing the VET program in Australian prisons concerns the punitive attitude of some prison staff who believe that prison is a place of punishment and not a place to enhance the lives of criminals. The method used to overcome these challenges involves decreasing competition between inmate work assignments and inmate programming with the scheduling of reintegration intervention courses, and systemic changes in the culture and structure of the Australian criminal justice system.

The American penal system might also benefit from systemic changes that engender less punitive and more supportive reintegration intervention treatment models. Models that address not only the educational and vocational needs of the inmate (James, 2015) but also reinforces the inmate desire to follow administrative policy and procedures by supporting cognitive skills development for individual change in thought processing (MacKenzie, 2013). Individual changes in thought processing have been shown to have a greater impact on reducing recidivism than other methods of reintegration intervention. Increasing the positive choices an inmate has for treatment options might decrease powerlessness and alienation while increasing inmate joining with and committing to the treatment process and reaching positively identified goals (White & Jones, 1996). A cognitive behavioral approach to inmate treatment while incarcerated might enable inmates to explore cognitions that influence self-esteem, self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation. According to a study conducted by Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, and Cullen (1990), cognitive behavioral approaches bring about the best behavior outcomes for prisoners, as evidenced by a reduction in recidivism for study participants. This area of study has been virtually overlooked in the literature and in research. However, the minimal number of studies conducted with this population suggests that a cognitive behavioral intervention might be a first line intervention strategy (Simourd & Olver, 2002). In an environment saturated with criminal attitudes and criminal self-concept it is a challenging endeavor to design programs which necessitate an environment highlighting psychological safety in order to practice new behavior choices and treatment options for positive outcomes. The literature suggests (MacKenzie, 2012; Simourd & Olver, 2002) that this is a worthwhile endeavor because it might benefit the criminal justice system, and society as a whole, by alleviating the ongoing costs associated with incarceration, community supervision, and recidivism.

There has been discourse concerning the effects of separation from society since men have been removed from the public by incarceration. The families affected by incarceration are at a high risk for decreased socioeconomic status, family dysfunction, and increased need for social services which incur costs to society (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Western & Pettit, 2010). The male inmate that enters and joins with the treatment process, who is offered a safe environment of a less punitive institution has an increased capacity for coping inside and outside of prison. The inmate who engages in cognitive behavioral therapy is in a better position to increase positive coping cognitions which has the potential to lead to positive behavior options accessible to the inmate upon release. Allowing offenders to acquire these skills for reframing contextual cues and supporting them in the continued benefits of practicing what has been learned while incarcerated in a treatment environment develops successful positive interaction processes. Cognitive behavioral skills applied by the inmate inside the prison and upon release have direct benefit for the inmate, the institution, society, and the family unit.

The societal implications for treatment of the prisoner towards reintegration could be far-reaching. From the social service system to the educational system and the economy. The impact on American society would be unmistakable. Allowing the inmate to perceive the importance of his self and the capacity he has to change the self-concept and employ re-evaluation strategies to commit to pro-social behavior processes in prison, and then in society, might decrease many costs to society as a whole. Increasing public awareness concerning the costs associated with the penal system, incarceration, community supervision, and the family system should ignite increased concern and advance research and implementation of evidence based best practice regarding this population. There is a need to increasingly invite this population to positively engage with society without the alienation and powerlessness employed by a harsh punitive system of incarceration. This advanced perspective coupled with increased positive attention might facilitate pro-social behaviors within the context of the prison setting and upon release.

Conclusion

The conceptualization of a new approach to a supportive American penal system like that implemented in Australia (AIC, 2008) has implications for inmate interventions. The mass incarceration era has resulted in overcrowding and the meager criminal justice funding make supervision and control the priority of the corrections administration (Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018; Lawrence, 2014). Keeping people who have been judged with criminal behavior separated from the rest of society and thereby keeping society safe, is the prevailing goal of incarceration. However, this separation is usually not eternal, and many convicted felons are released each year to a society that is vulnerable to the criminal ideology of victimization (Morenoff & Harding, 2014).

This paper has discussed the self-concept, self-identity, and self-presentation of the incarcerated male and the influence that identity styles, identity status, and developmental stages have in the treatment process for promoting positive social interaction. As the public begins to recognize the needs of the criminal justice population and their impact on society, it must be cognizant of the urgency of the inmate to increase proficiency in social skill and social competence. Thereby making prison programming a priority. This can be better accomplished through the development of prison programs which employ cognitive behavioral approaches to acquire reframing skills for positive behavior choices. This supportive, cognitive behavioral treatment environment might go a long way towards alleviating the costs associated with incarceration and recidivism. The atmosphere of a safe place in which to reside while learning from a treatment approach might allow the individual to acquire and practice new skills in an effort to facilitate positive social interaction upon release. This approach appears to be a better fit for the goal of rehabilitation for the inmate to re-enter and engage in society as a productive member.

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