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**Race, Imprisonment, and Reintegration:
Reflections of Black Male Ex-Prisoners**

by

Anne Veronica Harewood (B.A. Pol. Sci, B.Soc.Sc Crim.)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is intended to further the critical race theory goal of documenting the narratives of racially subjugated populations, particularly Blacks. It presents and critically engages with the subject of race and its relationship to imprisonment and reintegration by putting forward the stories of Black male ex-prisoners who have experienced a term of incarceration in a Canadian federal penitentiary. The author uses a critical race lens in order to examine the role of race in the lives of Black ex-prisoners. In addition, she puts forward a plea for academic and institutional discourses to place the experiential knowledge of these individuals at the forefront of criminological research.

Critical criminology theories that emphasize the importance of ethnographic data and epistemological assumptions that have challenged Eurocentric scholarship, which overlooks the consequences of racial inequality, guide the author's findings. As such, the primary goal of this research is to provide an arena for Black male ex-prisoners to express their realities as a racialized group who have historically been excluded from Canadian academe.

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INTRODUCTION

For me and I guess for a lot of Black men, coming in contact with police and the criminal justice system is really where we see ourselves most powerless. I may have done things that then come back. But the criminal justice institution does these things and never experiences them back. It's like each day they take a part of your soul away (*John*, quoted in Leder, 2000:18).

Prisons are powerful social institutions that serve to discipline and punish those who have been convicted of criminal offenses. In Canada, federal penitentiaries are reserved for individuals whose sentences exceed two years. Like all prisoners, these men and women are subjected to the pains of imprisonment. Studies show that prisons house a variety of populations including women, the poor, the mentally ill, the old, the young, the Black, the White and even the developmentally delayed (Conly, 1998; Denckla and Berman, 2001; Koban, 1983; Ortiz, 2000). Unfortunately, stereotypical representations of Black male and female prisoners seem to pervade criminological discourses in the few instances where this group is discussed. As Rice (1990) astutely points out, the history of racism and its implications in criminal justice contexts have largely been ignored. I will argue that a broader conceptual framework is necessary to acknowledge the double oppression that Black males face as racialized ex-prisoners. Also, I will attempt to show that the complexity of racial struggles is essential to understanding the strategies adopted by Black male ex-prisoners during reintegration. How does this groups' experience differ in the prison context? How are their differing needs accommodated by correctional agents? Who prepares them to re-enter their communities and succeed on the outside? These are some of the questions that I considered when I decided to engage with the topic of race and imprisonment.

Reintegration is the process in which prisoners are released into society and faced with the task of adapting to the community after a term of imprisonment. Experiencing freedom after a term of imprisonment is extremely challenging for all ex - prisoners. In general, ex-prisoners are not equipped with the required resources that will enable them to make a smooth transition into society. For some groups, the barriers may seem insurmountable. Black ex-prisoners in Canada are one of these groups but their voices have been silenced. This project is an attempt to address this absence.

This research focuses on Black male-ex-prisoners who have done time in Canadian federal penitentiaries and have managed to successfully reintegrate into their respective communities. Specifically, I explore how their experiences of imprisonment and reintegration have been shaped by race. The centerpiece of this thesis is an attempt at teasing out the factors that have allowed Black ex-prisoners to resettle into society. In addition, this research addresses the challenges that they face as racialized ex-prisoners. The narratives of Black ex-prisoners are the focal point of the research because their stories bring a level of authenticity that can not be matched by those who have never experienced jail. The following lines of inquiry guide me: How do Black ex-prisoners cope with racism in prison? Does correctional programming take into consideration the importance of race and culture? What support systems help Black ex-prisoners to make a smooth transition into the community? Within this broader framework, I focus on the strategies that Black ex-prisoners employ in order to facilitate a smooth transition into society. My goal is to expand on the existing academic and institutional discourses by placing race into the spotlight.

My interest in contributing to existing research around race and imprisonment was generated by several factors. First, I have had many interactions with Black prisoners over the past decade and this has changed my life dramatically. Secondly, I am a Black female criminologist who has been exposed to a Eurocentric curriculum that has failed to adequately address the issue of race. Furthermore, I am a Black woman who has been deviantized and the consequences of this are very real to me. In addition, I have always been committed to the promotion of social justice and this research is an opportunity to allow a group of individuals who have struggled with racial injustice to be heard. Indeed, documenting and critically engaging with Black ex-prisoners speaks to bigger issues such as how gender, class and race relations operate in our daily lives. My underlying assumptions about race and reintegration have shifted over the past few years after interviewing Black ex-prisoners. In doing this research, I have come to realize the centrality of race in my own life. This in itself has challenged my understanding of race and racism in powerful ways. It is my hope that this project will encourage criminologists and justice professionals to consult marginalized groups like Blacks when they are formulating penal policies and programs. Ultimately, I would like this project to assure Black ex-prisoners that their knowledge on race and imprisonment is an invaluable resource. With this in mind, I provide you with a breakdown of my chapters.

In chapter one, I outline and analyze the academic and institutional literature on prison and re-entry with a specific focus on the diversity of prison populations. As will be noted, while there has been significant literature on this topic worldwide, the Canadian scholarship is sparse and ethnographic studies are a rarity.

In chapter two, I discuss the theoretical framework of my research. The aim is to summarize the dominant discourses around race, to highlight some of the assumptions inherent to each and to clarify a couple of key concepts. This chapter explains the logic in my decision to merge critical criminology and critical race theory in order to produce 'Critical Race Criminology'.

After outlining the general framework, theoretical path, and overarching themes of my research, chapter three lays out the methodology as I explain the steps I take to obtain pertinent information from my research participants. To this end, I have drawn on qualitative research methods including critical ethnography and semi-structured interviews.

Finally, chapter four presents my analysis of the interviews and tries to develop the links between my theoretical underpinnings and my empirical findings. In this chapter, the narratives of my research subjects emerge. Indeed, documenting the stories of Black ex-prisoners can assist in understanding and explaining the interplay between race, imprisonment and reintegration. This triangular relationship is highlighted in this chapter. Also, I discuss the manner in which these Black male ex-prisoners are able to withstand the barriers that they must overcome as racialized subjects. To begin, I review the academic and institutional literature.

CHAPTER 1

Reading Imprisonment, Reintegration and Race: A Review of the Literature

I walk blindly through this even tranquil darkness until I feel the point,
open my eyes and see myself surrounded by subtle demons. Would cry
out but the clamour of my heart ends at a prison wall (Rives, 1992: 56)

The Canadian prison has been a site of controversy for many years. Over the last few decades, while some academics have engaged in a critical discourse about the penal system by questioning its utility and reformatory potential (Goffman, 1963; Garland 1999; Mathiesen, 2000), other scholars maintain that prisons are necessary to protect society from dangerous criminals (Chernoff et al., 1996; Caplow and Simon, 1999; Harris, 2002). Governmental reports have added to the debate by insisting that imprisonment succeeds in turning 'anti-social' individuals into law abiding citizens with pro-social values (Thurber, 1998; Ryan, 1991; Serin and Cousineau, 2001). Although they have been overshadowed by the dominant academic and institutional discourses which shape correctional policy, prisoners have also contributed to the discussion with their insights into the experience of incarceration through a critical examination of the carceral (Gaucher, 2002; Abu-Jamal, 1997; McKeown, 2001). Prison writers use autobiographical accounts to sketch the realities of incarceration.

Surprisingly, although extensive research has been done on prisons, there is limited scholarship that addresses the process of release and reintegration. This is especially true in the Canadian context. Given that most Canadian prisoners are eventually released, it is of utmost importance that their re-entry into the community is sufficiently explored.

Most of the research on released prisoners comes out of Britain and the United States and in both of these instances, the topic of reintegration is not adequately examined. Once the issue of race is factored into the discussion, the gap in the literature is even wider.

This chapter is divided into two major sections: CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) discourse and academic discourse. The distinction is deliberately made between these two discourses. First, the former is largely driven by penal policy while the latter is not. Secondly, it is important to contrast the differences between the two. In Part one of the chapter, I outline the institutional literature in order to provide a better understanding of how corrections approach the issue of release and reintegration. In Part two, I examine the academic scholarship on this topic. In this section, I highlight the major themes that emerge from the scholarly literature and address the urgency in attending to the racial diversity of the prison population. Keeping this in mind, let us now move on to discuss CSC discourse.

Part One: CSC Discourse

Since the carceral environment is controlled by the state, it is important to summarize the institutional discourses on the process of release and reintegration. In Canada, the Correctional Services of Canada are responsible for administering sentences of two years or more. They are also responsible for the management of federal penitentiaries of various security levels and for the supervision of prisoners serving conditional sentences in the community (CSC, 2003).

The institutional literature emphasizes public security because ensuring safety is one of CSC's primary objectives. The focus is placed on community protection, community functioning, risk and recidivism rates. Little attention is paid to the relationship between the life experiences of ex-prisoners and their reintegration process.

The literature around 'community protection' centers on the need for ex-prisoners to refrain from illegal conduct so that they can function as 'law abiding' citizens (CSC, 1999, Motiuk et al., 1993). The CSC discourse argues that the structured release of prisoners is the best way to ensure societal protection (Thurber, 1998; CSC, 1998; Ryan, 1991). The institutional literature on the process of release and reintegration highlights the importance of 'community functioning'. This is directly related to the employment and financial status of ex-prisoners (Andrews and Bonta, 1993; Gates, Dowden and Brown, 1998; Grant and Beal, 1998). Factors such as social networks, family ties and the emotional well being of ex-prisoners also contribute to 'community functioning' (Reitan, 2001; Muntigh, 2001). The CSC literature also discusses correctional programming as a central element in helping ex-prisoners to negotiate their successful release. During their incarceration, prisoners are expected to participate in programs that address their 'criminogenic needs' (Ruan, 1991; Gates, Dowden and Brown, 1998; Serin and Cousineau, 2001). These needs are determined by the attitude and conduct that a prisoner exhibits regarding employment, friends, education, substance abuse and intimate relationships. Programs include anger management, drug treatment and cognitive skills. The assumption is that released prisoners will benefit from these programs.

According to the CSC literature, this will enable them to adopt pro-social values and live in the community without re-offending. Those prisoners who do not participate in these programs are considered to be more likely to re-offend once they are released.

Risk assessment and recidivism rates are other pertinent issues that emerge out of the CSC literature on release and reintegration (Serin and Kennedy, 1997; Motiuk, 1996; Motiuk et al., 2003). This literature documents the attempt to develop accurate profiles of the prisoner population so that released prisoners are closely monitored to reduce risk. The risk/needs management scale, which is used by parole officers to determine the likelihood of an individual re-offending is discussed. In addition, the CSC literature reports that recidivism rates are lower for supervised ex-prisoners than non-supervised ex-prisoners (Motiuk, 1996; Motiuk et al., 2003).

The correctional literature in Canada acknowledges that certain racial groups are overrepresented in the prison population, particularly Aboriginals (Heckbert and Turkington, 2001; Motiuk and Belcourt, 1996; Motiuk et al., 1993; Solicitor General, 1993) . Consequently, a number of initiatives have been implemented to address this serious problem. In March of 1987, a *Task Force on the Reintegration of Aboriginal Offenders as Law Abiding Citizens* was established by the Solicitor General (Solicitor General, 1988). The objective of the task force was to identify the needs of Aboriginal prisoners upon re-entry into the community by examining their process of imprisonment from the time of admission to the time of release. Subsequently, the CSC created an Aboriginal Initiatives Branch, which is specifically aimed at formulating strategies to promote the safe reintegration of Aboriginal ex-prisoners into their respective communities (CSC, 1999).

The institutional literature also shows that correctional agents have engaged in studies that examine the risk of Aboriginal prisoners re-offending once they have been released into the community (Solicitor General, 1997).

In addition, the correctional literature addresses the diversity of the Canadian prison population in one document called *The Commissioner's Directive on Ethnocultural Offender Programs* (CSC, 2001). The objective of this policy is as follows:

To ensure the needs and cultural interests of offenders belonging to Ethnocultural minority groups are identified and that programs and services are developed and maintained to meet these needs (CSC, 2001).

The document says that prison officials are expected to encourage prisoners of specific groups to self identify as 'Ethnocultural minority offenders' so that they can ensure them equitable treatment and accommodate their special needs. An 'Ethnocultural offender' is defined as: "any individual or group of individuals who differ from the majority because of their linguistic, racial or cultural characteristics, their system of beliefs and their will to protect their cultural identity (CSC, 2001). According to the policy, it is the responsibility of CSC operational units to accommodate 'Ethnocultural offenders' who have requested linguistic, cultural or spiritual programs. This document also states that all correctional programming should take into account Ethnocultural differences. There is also a commitment made to combating racial harassment and discrimination within prison.

The scarcity of literature with respect to race and re-entry illustrates that the institutional literature should be broader and more inclusive. Instead, the institutional discourse focuses on actuarialism and risk management.

The correctional literature reveals that there is little attention being paid to the needs of racialized groups in prison, with the exception of Aboriginals and the policy regarding 'Ethnocultural offenders' is rather vague. Now that I have laid out the CSC discourse, I can move on to address the academic literature on released prisoners and reintegration.

Part Two: Academic Discourse

There are three major recurring themes that are addressed in the scholarly literature on released prisoners: 'family support' (Hairston, 1988; Lamb and Sampson, 1988; McCord, 1991; Seber et al., 1993), 'community concerns' (Lerman, 1975; Austin, 2001; Clear et al., 2001; Petersilia, 2001; Travis and Petersilia, 2001; Lauderdale, 1997) and 'ex-prisoner needs' (Waller, 1974; Davis, 1981; Muhammad, 1996; Hagell et al., 1995; Celinska, 2000). All of these studies shed valuable insight onto the subject of release and reintegration but short-term re-entry and high recidivism rates seem to be the focus of this discussion.

The 'family support' literature primarily discusses the importance of the family unit in assisting individuals upon their release. These studies emphasize that familial support networks can be critical to an ex-prisoners adjustment to community life (McCord, 1991; Seber et al, 1993). This research also addresses the need to provide satisfactory financial and social services to the families whose lives have been affected by incarceration (Hairston, 1988; Lamb and Sampson, 1988). These studies also discuss the financial and emotional costs of imprisonment on families (Loeber, 1986; Rosen, 1988).

The academic literature on 'community concerns,' looks at the impact of prisoner re-entry on a community. There is an interest in understanding how marginalized communities with high incarceration rates are able to cope when ex-prisoners return to these neighbourhoods (Clear et al., 2001). This literature outlines the role that community members can play in helping ex-prisoners to facilitate a smooth transition into society (Lauderdale, 1997; O'Connor et al., 1998; Petersilia, 2001; Travis and Petersilia, 2001). The economic and social hardships that communities experience as the result of released prisoners are also examined (Wilkinson, 1988; Crowe, 1989; Petersilia, 1999).

The 'ex-prisoner needs' literature looks at the barriers that ex-prisoners encounter upon their release (Waller, 1974; Muhammad, 1996; Celinska, 2000). They include unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing, educational attainment, emotional distress and discrimination (Sizaire, 1992; Hagell et al. 1995; Grier, 2000). This literature emphasizes that ex-prisoners re-enter the community feeling isolated and disillusioned but are unable to access appropriate counseling services that address the pains of imprisonment. According to the literature, the lack of supportive mechanisms can impede the reintegration process of ex-prisoners (Travis and Waul, 2003). The literature also mentions that other ex-prisoners are unable to adjust due to insufficient financial resources and this prevents them from making a smooth transition into the community (Glaser, 1995). These studies stress that the obstacles facing ex-prisoners are difficult to overcome because negotiating release is an ongoing struggle.

The academic discourse highlights that reintegration is not solely the responsibility of penal institutions. Some of the research emphasizes that a collaborative effort between correctional institutions and community organizations is necessary to ensure that the needs of ex-prisoners are being met (O'Connor et al. 1998; Seber et al. 1993; Travis and Petersilia, 2001). I have explored the literature that focuses on ex-prisoners generally. I will now move on to discuss the academic literature that addresses the diversity of prisoners.

(1) Incarceration and Diversity

Over the past 20 years, there has been a considerable increase in the literature that addresses the heterogeneity of the prison population. In the area of release and reintegration, most of the scholarship on the diversity of prisoners has focused on gender. It is important to point out that the question of race is explored to an extent in prison studies but is largely neglected when it comes to studies on the process of release. A variety of people are housed in prisons so highlighting the diversity of incarcerated populations is necessary. A review of the literature on diverse groups in prison illustrates that the correctional system faces challenges in trying to accommodate the needs of various prisoners, especially racial minorities (Blanche, 1993; Smith, 1994; Russell, 1998). These studies also show that race and gender impact an individual's experience of incarceration (Player, 1989; Tennison, 1996; Button, 1997) and reintegration.

According to the literature on diversity in prison, female prisoners are the fastest growing population in penitentiaries worldwide. In the U.K, the penal population for women has doubled over the past decade (Bosworth, 1999). Gender inequality is important to consider within the context of imprisonment because when prisons were built, they were meant to lock up men primarily (Eaton, 1993; Goff, 1999). It is only in recent years that penal institutions began to recognize that the needs of female prisoners differ from those of men (Carlen, 1990; Bosworth, 1999; Cook and Davies, 1999). Many women in prison are poor and have been survivors of sexual and physical abuse. Girshick (1999) notes that the gender inequality that pervades the wider society also plays out in the penal environment. In addition, there are needs specific to female prisoners that penal institutions have neglected to consider. This literature emphasizes that female prisoners are largely an invisible population because of their small numbers and the patriarchal penal system. This scholarship also outlines the struggles that women face upon re-entry and sometimes adopts a feminist lens to understand the social condition of this marginalized group (Eaton, 1993; Mann, 1995; Chesney-Lind, 1997). It is easy to see the importance of diversity in prisons when examining recent analyses that center around issues of gender. Moreover, the literature indicates that women's experiences of imprisonment are largely defined by gender. Keeping this in mind, the ensuing discussion looks at how academic scholarship has addressed the issue of race in relationship to imprisonment and reintegration.

(2) The question of race

Two populations are highlighted in the scholarship that explores the issue of race and imprisonment; Aboriginals and to a lesser extent, Blacks. The literature on Aboriginal prisoners' reveals that most of them come from economically disadvantaged communities with high unemployment rates (Culhane, 1991). There is a consensus among academics that the preservation of Aboriginal culture can help Aboriginal prisoners in their reintegration process (Waldram, 1997; Nuffield, 1998; Phillips, 2002). This is one of the reasons that Aboriginal specific programming has been introduced into the correctional systems in Canada and the United States (Zellerer, 1994; LaPrairie, 1996).

The scholarship on Aboriginal prisoners in Canada highlights their overrepresentation. Their disproportionate representation must be addressed because it is predicted that they will be 20 percent of Canada's prison population by 2010 (Griffiths, 2004). Presently, Aboriginals are 3 percent of Canada's population but they make up 17% of Canada's federal prison population (Griffiths, 2004). The literature notes that in provinces like Saskatchewan, almost 50 percent of the prison population is Aboriginal (Profile of Native Inmates, 2002). Lobby groups fighting for Aboriginal self-determination have played an instrumental role in ensuring that the needs of Aboriginal prisoners are met (Adams, 1989; Benton Bonai, 1988; Miller, 1991; Ross, 1996). This literature is effective in illustrating that certain incarcerated populations have special needs, especially those who have a history of social, economic and political marginalization.

The literature on race and imprisonment explores the relationship between social marginality and penal policy (Beckett and Western, 2001; Parenti 2001). Wacquant (2001) echoes this sentiment in his discussion of black hyper-incarceration in the United States. The sobering realities of 'mass incarceration' a phrase used by a number of commentators (e.g. Drucker, 2002; Pattilo et al. 1998; Weiman and Western 2004) are examined. The connection between poverty, racism and imprisonment is also discussed. The American literature is highlighted due to the absence of Canadian material on this topic.

(3) Black prisoners in America

It is integral to highlight the importance of Black prison writing in the United States because it has become a genre in its own right. The literature written by Black American prisoners and ex-prisoners reveals that the *Biography of Malcolm X* (1964) sparked an explosion of African American prison writing, particularly from members of the Black Panther Party (Jackson, 1972; Newton and Huggins 1975; Davis, 1974). Writers such as Angela Davis, Assata Shakur (1987) and Mumia Abu-Jamal (1996; 1997) set out to examine the relationship between race, politics and imprisonment in America. Their analyses helped to give voice to Black prisoners and ex-prisoners. In addition, this literature shed valuable insight onto the plight of racial minorities in the carceral system.

The literature on Blacks in prison looks at the racial segregation of prisons (Wacquant, 2001), and the impact of incarceration on African American families (Ayers, 1997; Harris and Miller, 2001).

These studies note that Black men in the U.S. have higher incarceration rates, mortality rates and unemployment rates than their White counterparts (Harlow, 1998; Lafree et al., 1992). The literature suggests that these realities have negative consequences for the mental health of Black male prisoners. The high incarceration rates of Black men in particular, have a devastating effect on their families. This scholarship reveals that the involvement of community groups like churches in prison can be beneficial to Black prisoners (Celinska, 2000; Grier, 2000). In the United States, Black females represent the largest percentage of women behind bars. They make up almost half of the female prison population (Johnson, 2003). The importance of race and its impact on reintegration is illustrated by a couple of authors who conducted interviews with Black American female prisoners and ex-prisoners (Johnson, 2003; Collins, 1993). Johnson (2003) is able to show the perspectives of Black female prisoners and ex-prisoners by conducting interviews with them where they discuss their experiences of incarceration. She emphasizes that Black men and women share a common racial identity that enables them to resist their imprisonment in different ways. Some ex-prisoners talk about Black women mobilizing and carrying out protests and hunger strikes in defiance of their keepers. Other ex-prisoners recall refusing to participate in correctional programming that was culturally insensitive. A few of these women stress that culturally specific programming for Black women is virtually non-existent in prison. They also mention that policies to address racism in prison are inadequate. Johnson's research concludes that racially engendered experiences of Black women behind bars deserve particular attention because they are a marginalized group who is grossly overrepresented in penal institutions.

Furthermore, she asserts that the special needs of Black female prisoners are largely ignored and this makes their experiences of imprisonment even more difficult to endure.

(4) Black ex- prisoners in America

The scholarship on Black prisoners and release speaks to the idea that Blacks are an incarcerated population with special needs. It examines the impact of incarceration on Black people, who comprise almost percent of America's prison population despite making up only 12 percent of America's populace (Donziger, 1996). This means that imprisonment has become one of the social institutions that structure this racial group's experience. The literature on Black ex- prisoners discusses the inability of correctional institutions to prepare Black male prisoners for re-entry into their communities (Billingsly, 1978, Asser, 1992; Grier, 2000). DeBerry (1994) wrote a seminal work on network systems in prison society and illustrated that strong social supports play a vital role in the lives of Black ex-prisoners before and after their release. The scholarship also reveals that racism plays a crucial role in the successful re-entry of Black male ex-prisoners who are often denied employment and housing (Grier, 1999). In addition, the academic discourse on this topic suggests that familial and cultural support play special roles in the lives of released Black male ex-prisoners (Laurendale, 1993). However, the families and communities that these men leave behind also end up traumatized by the loss of their loved ones (Carroll, 1982; Cross, 1993; Dordick, 1997).

The high incarceration rates of Black men in particular, have a devastating effect on their families. This scholarship reveals that the involvement of community groups like churches in prison can be beneficial to Black prisoners (Celinska, 2000; Grier, 2000). Now that I have discussed the American academic discourse that centers on Black prisoners and reintegration, it is time to discuss Black prisoners in Canada.

(5) Black prisoners in Canada

Shifting to the Canadian context, while the overrepresentation of Blacks is less dramatic than in the U.S., it is still significant. Black males constitute 5 percent of the federal prison population and Black females constitute 7 percent of the federal prison population. This is cause for alarm when Blacks make up about 1 percent of Canada's population (Griffiths, 2004). According to the Canadian literature, the situation for Blacks in Ontario prisons is even more alarming with Blacks accounting for 15 percent of provincial admissions in contrast to them making up 3 percent of the province's population. In Quebec, Blacks are one of the most overrepresented groups, comprising 6.1 percent of the federal prison population (Profile of Federal Offenders, 2002). There is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to Black prisoners in Canada. The Canadian literature on Black prisoners has only two major documents that address the plight of Black prisoners and both were written more than ten years ago. One is *Racism Behind Bars: The treatment of black and other racial minority prisoners in Ontario prisons* (1994). The other is *Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System* (1995).

These reports help to illustrate that racism conditions the carceral experiences of Black prisoners. This in turn is likely to impact their reintegration processes.

A summary of *Racism Behind Bars* is necessary to highlight that racial inequality affects the carceral experiences of Black prisoners in specific ways. Ontario prisons are the focus of this report but it is fair to assume that racism exists in prisons nationwide. This document is of particular significance because Black prisoners were interviewed and consulted so that they could talk about the impact of incarceration on their lives.

The Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System emerged in 1992 with a very specific mandate. They investigated the policies and procedures in the criminal justice system that lead to systemic racism. The commission recognized that the racial inequalities that exist in society are mirrored in the prisons. More specifically, they wanted to expose the racism that Blacks and other racial groups were forced to endure in prison. This inquiry involved conducting comprehensive interviews with prisoners, prison officials, ministry officials, professionals who work with prisoners and staff from advocacy groups in the corrections field.

The commission's report discusses the racial hostility that characterizes Ontario prison environments. It was discovered that Black prisoners are regularly subjected to racist language and taunted by staff. Prisoners informed the commission that staff routinely engaged in racial stereotyping by making judgements about the lifestyles of Black prisoners. Many Black male prisoners said that correctional officers stereotyped them as being very violent and aggressive (pp. 15-29).

The commission investigated the issue of racial segregation in Ontario prisons. It became apparent that in many institutions, some units are predominantly black and others are predominantly white. In fact, at the Toronto Jail, there were some living areas that were exclusively Black and others that were only White. The commission reported that in some prisons, "Jamaican Black" prisoners or those who were perceived as such were housed separately in distinct living areas. Some correctional officers showed their contempt by telling the commission that prisoners of the same race are easier to manage when they are put together (pp.31-38).

The report discussed the racist policies that Ontario prisons practice when it comes to the delivery of rehabilitation programs and prison services. Some Black male prisoners said that treatment programs were not culturally sensitive and failed to cater to their needs. They also expressed that they were often placed in group counseling sessions with prison officials who were insensitive to issues of racism.

As a result, these prisoners informed the commission that they were unable to bring up the topic of race for fear that professional facilitators would not take them seriously. In addition, the commission was surprised to find that grooming products were often inadequate for Black prisoners. Prison staff is responsible for providing prisoners with personal care items such as combs, shampoo, other hair care products and soap. Black prisoners reported that the personal care products provided to them fail to meet their needs. They are given shampoos and combs that are unsuitable for their hair. In fact, prison administrators informed the commission that they do not stock suitable products for black people due to "security concerns".

There was no explanation as to why products for White prisoners are judged as being safe while those intended for Black prisoners are deemed unsafe (pp.79-81). Black prisoners are not in an economic position to purchase alternative products so they are forced to use grooming products that can actually cause them harm.

The commission concluded that the racial hostility and intolerance that characterizes Ontario penal institutions is unacceptable. The fact that prison management has not taken the problem seriously is problematic because Black citizens whether inside or outside of prison, have the right to be treated with respect. The commission stated that there needs to be a dramatic transformation in the culture of corrections because the racism that black prisoners are subjected to makes the experience of incarceration even more dramatic and it may also hinder their reintegration.

Several recommendations were made in order to address the findings of their inquiry into the treatment of Black prisoners in Ontario prisons. These included appointing an anti-racism co-ordinator for adult corrections, abolishing the racial segregation of prisoners and ensuring programs and services that are culturally sensitive to the needs of black prisoners. The commission also recommended that steps be taken to eliminate the racist language and racial stereotyping that causes prison staff to treat Black prisoners differently. Despite the creation of this historic document, there has been no follow-up study that assesses whether any progress has been made with respect to the treatment of black prisoners in Ontario prisons. Moreover, there have not been studies conducted in other provinces that address the treatment of Black prisoners.

(6) Limitations of Literature

The academic and institutional literature on release and reintegration focuses mostly on short-term re-entry and does not examine the long-term impact of reintegration. The research conducted in this area highlights the failure of reintegration and does not give credit to ex-prisoners who have managed to make a successful transition into the community. It is evident that the firsthand accounts of released prisoners are missing from the discourse on release and reintegration. In fact, the academic literature focuses primarily on the impact of imprisonment on families and communities instead of examining the affects that incarceration has on prisoners and ex-prisoners. A lot of the American scholarship on the diversity of the prison populations, addresses the issue of female prisoners. While it is true that incarcerated women face special challenges, the same can be said about racial groups like Blacks, who are overrepresented in Canadian and American prisons. It is also striking to observe that there is more scholarship on gender than race because women are such a small percentage of the prison population. On the other hand, racial groups like Blacks who make up almost 50 percent of the prison population in the U.S. are not extensively written about. (U.S. Justice Department, 2002). The few studies that address the issue of race and imprisonment tend to be autobiographical accounts of the prison experience and although they provide an understanding of the crippling affects of incarceration, they lack an analysis of the reintegration process.

When it comes to the Canadian literature on race and imprisonment, although Blacks are overrepresented in the Atlantic region, Quebec and Ontario (Profile of Federal Offenders, 2002), they are largely excluded from the discourse.

Instead, numerous studies on the overrepresentation of Aboriginals dominate the literature (LaPrairie, 1996; Nuffield, 1998; Phillips, 2002). It is impossible to ignore the eleven-year old study conducted by the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal justice system which concluded that Black prisoners are a marginalized group with special needs. More importantly, this inquiry showed that the experiences of racism in prison can impact the reintegration of Black ex-prisoners. It is vital to examine the experiences of Black prisoners in Canada because they can add new critical perspectives to the prison discourse. In addition, by highlighting the accounts of Black male ex-prisoners, the scholarship on race and imprisonment will become more inclusive. Furthermore, a marginalized population with a shared history of racial discrimination will have an opportunity to be heard. It is time for Black prisoners' experiences of release and reintegration to be added to the discourse so that the existing gap in Canadian academic and institutional literature can be filled. In the next discussion, I will set out the theoretical underpinnings of my research so that my conceptual framework becomes clear.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Underpinnings

Possibly the most notable feature of race as a concept is the way it has inveigled observers into assuming that the main issue is that of the nature of differences between populations, and that they should concentrate upon what "race" is, as if this would determine the one scientifically valid use for the word. Physical differences catch people's attention so readily that they are less quick to appreciate that the validity of "race" as a concept depends upon its value as an aid in explanation (Banton:2000:52).

Questions often arise about the concept of race because of its various complexities. But what exactly is race and who has it? Why does race continue to be relevant in criminological discussions? In order to explore these questions in greater detail, it becomes necessary to theorize race. By developing a conceptual framework, I will construct a lens that enables me to frame my theoretical path more accurately.

For centuries, racial terms have often been used to describe and explain human differences. It is important to discuss the phenomenon of 'race' because this is what guides my research. In this chapter, I outline the interpretive framework for my research; critical race theory. Part one discusses the concept of race and the evolution of its meaning. Part two explains the term 'raced' and explores the emergence of the 'sociology of race relations' by tracing the various intellectual shifts in this field of inquiry. Outlining what is understood by Critical Race Theory is the work of part three. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to applying the concept of raced by carefully uncovering the factors that will enable me to engage in Critical Race Criminology.

It is important to recognize the progression and transformation of the construction of race because this helps to contextualize the intellectual understandings of the time. Moreover, this demonstrates that the meanings of race are continually being reconstituted and renegotiated. Michael Banton notes that "race is a concept rooted in a particular culture and a particular period of history" (1997:32). Over the past decade, the social construction of race has been discussed extensively in both anthropological and sociological literature.

Part One: Theorizing Race

The phenomenon of race is indisputably part of our social and historical reality, and it thus announces itself as a principal item on the social and moral agenda of the next century (Lang, 2000:4)

The concept of race has been central to twentieth century social, political, economic and intellectual development. In fact, the idea of race can be traced back to the 14th century, when European colonialists encountered populations whose physical appearance, language and culture differed dramatically from theirs (Back and Solomos, 2000). According to Cokley (2002:30), "the exclusionist ideology of race evolved exclusively with Europeans in North America". He contends that colonialism, conquest and the exploitation of African and other indigenous populations was based on the physical marker of skin colour. Prior to this time period, the concept of race did not exist. This is particularly notable because in present day, race has become such an important element in social interaction and societal structure.

In its earliest phase, "race" meant descent. In other words, human beings were classified according to their racial origins. For example, Blacks were considered to be descendants of Africans while Whites were thought to be the descendants of Europeans.

European and North American scientific writing in the eighteenth century used race as a concept in order to explain certain phenotypical differences between human beings (Allen, 1994; Dubow, 1995; Augsten, 1996). This led to the growth of taxonomy and scientific theories of race, which argued that the world was comprised of distinct 'races' (Blumenbach, 1969; Montagu 1965; Smedley 1993). The argument here was that the capacity for the cultural development of each race was biologically determined.

Influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, biologism attempted to illustrate that Blacks and other non-White populations were biologically inferior (Gobineau, 1967; Kephart, 1960). The perpetrators of this type of thinking saw themselves as scientists and conducted experiments in order to prove that Whites were more genetically evolved than non-Whites (Singer, 1950).

Scholars who branded this type of thinking as inherently biased eventually challenged biological discourses around race. These academics were able to conduct research that showed that there are no genetic characteristics possessed by all those labeled as Black or White (Bonacich 1989; Gordon, 1997; Marable, 1991). Moreover, some studies illustrated that intra group differences actually exceeded inter group differences. For them, science was being used to justify policies of repression and discrimination. Black Caribbean scholars like C.L.R James and Frantz Fanon were able to articulate that social forces dictated racial hierarchies. Nonetheless, quasi-biological notions of race continue to be employed in most contemporary theoretical discussions. Indeed, the categories employed to differentiate among human groups along racial lines reveal themselves, upon serious examination, to be at best imprecise, and at worst completely arbitrary.

Although many scholars have acknowledged that race is a social construct, the social reality of its consequences are impossible to ignore. The concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world. Contemporary societies are suffused with racial meaning to which all members are subjected to varying degrees. According to Percival Williams,

Race is a socially and historically constructed concept by which members of society endow human skin colour variations, which have no intrinsic meaning with meanings that reinforce a hierarchy of privilege and power in society (2001: 215).

Almost one hundred years earlier, W.E.B. Dubois, a prolific Black American scholar made a similar assertion when he wrote,

Racial categories reflect superficial distinctions that are emphasized because of specific social and political power arrangements rather than underlying stable characteristics of individuals (1989:14).

The comments of Williams and Dubois emphasize the centrality of race in shaping social and economic relations. Arguably, the result is that race has become a central organizing feature in political and social life. This reality is especially reflected in the body of work commonly referred to as the 'sociology of race relations'.

Part Two: The 'race relations problematic'

The emergence of the 'race relations problematic,' was largely in response to the Civil Rights movement that politicized Blacks in the United States. Initially, the major focus of this theoretical framework was on inter-racial and inter-ethnic relations between majority and minority communities, particularly in institutions like housing, education and employment (Patterson, 1963; Banton, 1977).

Also known as culturalist perspective advocates, these academics placed emphasis on the distinctive cultural attributes of racial minority communities while exploring questions of assimilation and reintegration. The culturalist perspective received criticism from sociologists, who argued that these scholars were ignoring the social processes that shaped race relations.

Subsequently, Black scholars like Hylan Lewis (1978), Allison Daves (1977) and St. Clair Drake (1979) framed the 'race relations problematic' differently. They emphasized the role of racial ideologies while engaging in discussions about race and identity in the context of their own experiences of subordination and exclusion. Their work was also an attempt to give marginalized racial groups the opportunity to discuss the importance of race in a public forum. One of the most seminal academic works to come out of the 'race relations problematic' was John Rex's *Race Relations in Sociological Theory* (1970). In this academic work, Rex attempted to devise a theoretical framework for the analysis of racism and race relations. He looked at the forms of social stratification that emanated from racial distinctions and concluded that certain social relations produced structural conditions that facilitated race relations (Rex, 1970; Rex and Moore 1967). For Rex, racially structured social realities were normalized, especially in Western societies.

By the early 1980's, there was another shift in this discourse when a number of critics began to question the 'race relations problematic'. Neo-Marxist, anti-racist, feminist and post-colonial perspectives informed these theoretical critiques.

Neo-Marxist analyses examined the role of political, class and ideological relationships in shaping understandings of racial divisions in society (Miles, 1982; Castles and Kosack, 1973). These theorists criticized the culturalist perspective for ignoring the importance of social class location in theoretical discussions about race. Post-colonial approaches attempt to illustrate that racism is not the only factor influencing race relations (Spivak, 1987; Bhabha, 2000 and Gilroy, 1993), challenging essentialist notions of race. Black feminists like bell hooks helped to stimulate new areas of debate by illustrating the intersection between race, class and gender (hooks, 1994; hooks, 1995).

In the 1990's, theories of race relations were transformed once more as academics began to focus their attention on culture and identity with respect to race. In these analyses, the productions of racial and ethnic identities were explored and the politics of difference was highlighted (Hall, 1992; Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Arthur and Shapiro, 1996). These theorists discussed cultural pluralism and diversity as being central to understandings of race and racism. Questions of cultural transformation and change remain central to contemporary conceptualizations of race. Currently, "race" is often used for the self-identification and mobilization of individuals. It is also used to justify certain political agendas and empirical research. But what does it mean to talk about race relations?

For some scholars, race relations stem from the imposition of white superiority on non-white populations. For others, race relations refer to groups of different races interacting and struggling for dominance. Robert Park poignantly states:

Race relations are the relations existing between peoples distinguished by marks of racial descent, particularly when these racial differences enter into the consciousness of the individuals and groups so distinguished, and by so doing determine in each case the individuals' conception of himself

as well as his status in the community. Thus, anything that intensifies race consciousness; anything, particularly if it is a permanent physical trait, that increases an individual's visibility and by doing makes more obvious his identity with a particular ethnic unit or racial group, tends to create and maintain the conditions under which race relations as here defined, may be said to exist (1950:26).

Park's words suggest that race relations are made possible through the acknowledgement of difference. In this sense, race is a relational concept that often enforces social distances.

Part Three: Being 'Raced'

The concept of "raced" is crucial to this discussion because it emphasizes that becoming conscious of race is a social process. Therefore, being "raced" is a result of a combination of factors. Individuals are "raced to varying degrees" (Brown, 1997; James, 1991). Desiree Brown eloquently says, "As people of colour, we have no choice but to be raced. Others have the choice to operate in a paradigm of racelessness for their racial features constitute society's norms" (1997:16). In their early childhood, many Blacks quickly learn that racial slurs and stereotypes are to be expected. Being called "nigger" or "Blackie" becomes one aspect of being raced. When individuals become aware of the fact that they are raced, this often shapes their identity. Blacks happen to belong to a group that is highly raced. Within the dominant Canadian framework, Whites emerge, paradoxically and counter-intuitively as non-raced or raceless. It is from this normative position of racelessness that they engage in the racing of 'others'. Dyer elaborates on this point by saying:

The sense of whites as non-raced is most evident in the absence of reference to whiteness in the habitual speech and writing of white people in the West.

We (whites) will speak of, say, the blackness or Chineseness of friends, neighbours, colleagues, customers or clients, and it may be in the most genuinely friendly and accepting manner, but we don't mention the whiteness of the white people we know (2000: 540).

For Blacks in Canada, racial ascription by others is so insistent that its effects are difficult to escape. Consequently, Blacks begin to accept the permanence of being raced and the consequences that accompany that reality.

Although Goffman's work was done before the concept of raced was introduced, it is easy to see the relationship between stigma and being raced. Goffman (1963) argues that society categorizes individuals by applying certain attributes to specific groups. For instance, being Black might be associated with being poor and violent. Consequently, others are continually reminding individuals who belong to this group that they are somehow different because of their membership in that racial category. Therefore, the stigmatization of Blacks is another component of being "raced". While being assigned to a category is a precondition of group membership, there has to be something that is socially meaningful for people to acknowledge their membership. There must be a reason why individuals designated as Black end up accepting and adopting that categorization. The common experience of exclusion can foster a strong sense of solidarity among a social group. Indeed, being raced has very real social consequences that may impact all facets of an individual's life. The process of being raced is unique because a number of different variables come into play. There are different factors that determine the level to which an individual is raced. Revealing the main components of Critical Race Theory helps to reflect this idea in further detail.

Part Four: From Critical Race Theory to Critical Race Criminology

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is premised on the notion that race permeates all social structures and organizations in society. It is considered to be one of the most radical contemporary theories on race. CRT elaborates on how being raced gets played out in everyday life. It emerged in the late 1970's with the scholarship of Derek Bell and Alan Freeman. It was largely a response to the development of African American intellectual thought after the Civil rights struggle (Wing, 2001). Influenced by critical legal studies and race relations scholarship, critical race theorists were disillusioned by traditional liberal approaches to racial justice. They developed a discussion and analysis of the racial predicament in the United States. Drawing on neo-Marxism, post modern philosophy and critical sociology, supporters of CRT emphasize the need to understand race and racism. Moving beyond the conventional and basic questions about race and power, critical race theorists argue that people of colour speak from an experience that is largely informed by racism (Delgado, 1995; Bell, 1997). Influenced by feminist ethnography, critical race theorists encourage the voices of marginalized populations to be brought to the forefront. They also acknowledge that race is a socio-historical concept whose meaning is given expression by specific social relations (Omi and Winant, 1997).

There are three key assertions that are advanced in CRT. The most important one is that racism is endemic in North American society. Indeed, the normalization of racism speaks to society's acceptance of it. Secondly, the idea of interest convergence is articulated. This means that Whites will only support racial progress for Blacks if it works to their advantage. Here, they are referring specifically to the White American liberal moderates who joined Blacks in the Civil Rights struggle.

Finally, critical race theorists argue that a "call to context" is necessary. The argument here is that racial oppression must be challenged through storytelling, counterstorytelling and the analysis of narrative. This strategy is necessary to counteract the myths that make up racial discourses. CRT looks to the law as a starting point for engaging in a racial analysis of the criminal justice system. Critical race theorists note that legal relations between racial minority groups and the majority group are tied to the legacy of conquest and colonialism. For instance, the "Jim Crow" laws of the 1950's stipulated that Blacks were inferior beings and that they were undeserving of the same rights as Whites. Segregation laws successfully portrayed Blacks as being unworthy of citizenship and respect. Critical race theorists contend that legal storytelling renders Blacks inferior to their White counterparts. They continue by arguing that members of the dominant group are able to justify their worldview through legal texts, which invariably translate into racist social policies. Richard Delgado writes,

Stories, parables, chronicles and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset- the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings against a background of which legal and political discourse takes place. These matters are rarely focused on. They are like eyeglasses we have worn a long time. They are nearly invisible, we use them to scan and interpret the world and only rarely examine them for themselves. Ideology-the received wisdom--makes current social arrangements seem fair and natural. Those in power sleep well at night-their conduct does not seem to them like oppression. (1995: 65).

For critical race theorists, counterstorytelling is the remedy because it enables Blacks and other racial groups who are subordinated, to construct their own narratives and speak their own truths. Critical race theorists use counternarratives as a strategy in order to challenge and contest the dominant reality, which makes assumptions about certain racial groups, particularly Blacks.

They assert that many people who have been telling legal stories silence those who belong to 'outgroups.' Outgroups consist of individuals whose consciousness has been suppressed, devalued and problematized. Delgado and other critical race scholars put forward a plea for narrative so that members of the 'outgroups' can begin to shape these legal stories, which do not at the present time represent them accurately. Through narratives, outgroups can develop their own shared understandings and meanings. This might help to foster a sense of solidarity among members of the outgroups. These stories also serve as a kind of "counter reality" (Delgado, 1995:64).

For critical race theorists, the imposition of the "dominant gaze" must be challenged. Bell (1997) argues that the idea of Whiteness has been constructed as a superior status. When subjugated populations like Blacks are given the opportunity to add their stories into those of the dominant group, a more complete picture of reality materializes. This in turn facilitates the incorporation of neglected groups by enabling their stories to become part of these shared understandings, which the dominant group has historically claimed as their own.

In developing my theoretical framework, it is imperative for me to trace the origin of my intellectual path. The Critical Criminology perspective is one of the key components guiding my theory. Critical criminologists argue that discussions about crime and crime control must take into account the role of inequality and power. Furthermore, they contend that some groups are more likely to suffer oppressive social relations based on racism, sexism and class division (Burke, 2005). Critical criminology calls for the examination of marginality and exclusion in reference to the criminalization of certain populations.

In addition, critical criminologists encourage the use of ethnographic data as a means of detailing the specific contexts and lived experiences of individuals involved in the criminal justice system (Hall and Scraton, 1981; Welch, 2005). As previously mentioned, my theoretical framework is also informed by CRT, which is largely influenced by critical criminology. However, its lens is even more specific. Borrowing from critical criminology, which acknowledges that prisons are state institutions that reinforce social inequalities, CRT places race at the centre of inquiry and urges subordinated groups like Blacks to articulate their experiences of criminal justice in public forums. I am merging these two traditions to create 'critical race criminology'. In the following section, I will outline how I am adapting critical race theory in my research. In order to accomplish this, I will discuss the major elements that I must attend to in order to do 'critical race criminology'.

Critical race theory serves as a valuable tool in my research. It provides me with a logical point of entry into my analysis. Since I am modifying it to suit my objectives, I will refer to my theoretical framework as 'critical race criminology'. But what is critical race criminology and why is it appropriate in this context? These questions will be answered in the following discussion.

Central to my theoretical framework is the notion that racism is pervasive in society. More specifically, I am arguing that racism is endemic in the Canadian prison system. As mentioned earlier, the overrepresentation of Blacks in provincial and federal institutions speaks to this reality. The normalization of racism in the criminal justice system means that institutional programs and policies often ignore the experiences of racially subjugated groups, with the exception of Aboriginals.

Like critical race scholars "call to context," I am centering the counternarratives of Black male ex-prisoners to create a space for their stories about imprisonment and reintegration. In this context, the term narrative is being used in accordance with CRT. For them, narrative is another word for story and this is the way I am using it. Traditional social science scholarship uses the term narrative to mean a free flowing enunciation of one's story. This means that the interviewee is the one that dictates the discussion. In this case, the researcher is not determining the direction of the interview because he or she wants the interviewee to speak freely. In my exchange with the research participants, I use prompts to shape the discussion and their stories emerge from this process.

But how can I do critical race criminology effectively? What are the core elements that must be considered when I embark on this intellectual journey? By adopting a critical race lens, I will use the concept of being raced as a point of entry into my analysis. As previously discussed, there are various factors that influence the extent to which an individual is raced. The four factors that I will focus on are racism, the construction of the 'other', identity and subjectivity.

Racism is probably the most important factor that impacts the degree to which an individual is raced. Carmichael and Hamilton define racism as "the predication of decisions and practices on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group" (2001:3). Invariably, groups that are continually being raced share a tortured history of marginalization (Birt, 2002).

Through racial discrimination, certain groups are treated with hatred and contempt due to a belief that their skin colour and other visible physical differences make them inferior (Farr, 2002). Racism aims to exclude and sometimes exterminate specific "raced" groups. In this sense, racism is an ideological set of practices and discourses.

Racism is something that Blacks have no control over. They do not voluntarily expose themselves to this conduct. Keeping this in mind, it is possible that some Blacks experience more racism than other raced groups simply because their skin colour is more visible (Bell, 1993; Reich, 1981). For Blacks and other non-White "raced" groups, racism has negative consequences. It can influence their access to employment, education, housing and even healthcare. It may also affect their contact with the criminal justice system. Essentially, racism serves as a reminder to Blacks that being raced is a process that they can not escape. For Black ex-prisoners, the amount of racism that they experience in prison can impact their reintegration. Moreover, the racism that they face upon re-entry can make the transition from prison to the community particularly challenging. Although racism can never be measured, a critical race lens enables me to understand the role of race in the lives of Black male ex-prisoners.

The construction of the 'other' is another factor that affects the degree to which an individual is raced. The production of social science knowledge about the racialized other creates ideas and principles about otherness that are perpetuated through racial stereotypes (Mohanty, 1991; Young, 1990). But who is the 'other?' Usually, this refers to those groups who have been stripped of the power to speak for themselves. To be silenced is to be defined as lacking the capacity to express oneself.

Furthermore, being silenced delegitimizes individuals and strips them of their opportunity to impart knowledge. Consequently, the 'others' are spoken about as though they are outside of society's norms. The 'other' is foreign, immigrant, non-White, exotic, primitive, native, Black, Oriental, Asian, Latino, refugee and weak. Frequently, 'otherness' is constructed as lesser (Said, 1978; Gabriel 1994). Assumptions are made that the 'other' is not capable of representing her or him. Therefore, those who are more equipped to speak on their behalf must represent her or him. There are certain characteristics that are ascribed to define the other and this necessarily elicits a definition of the self.

With respect to Blacks, the construction of the 'other' helps to explain why they continue to be subordinated. It is through this discourse that the image of the savage, lazy, predatory Black male has materialized (Samir, 1977; Cutrufelli, 1983; Stoler, 2000). In addition, Black males have been victimized by their double status as Black and ex-prisoner. To this end, they are part of the other 'other' who have been silenced (Stanley and Wise, 1990). This means that Black men experience themselves as 'different' on two fronts: because they are 'raced' individuals who share a consciousness of oppression and discrimination and because as ex-prisoners, they have been at the margins of society. Members of the other 'other' also include the poor, the sexually 'deviant' and lesbian women to name a few.

The phenomenon of othering is particularly problematic because it causes individuals to believe that certain groups will act in specific ways. It can also lead those who are being othered to internalize the stereotypes that are written about them (Bhaba, 2000; Lacapra, 1991).

Fanon (1986) emphasizes that Black males were constantly forced to look at themselves through the eyes of others. They were bombarded with negative images of themselves and this often had a traumatic effect on their psyche. This is why the construction of the 'other' has a profound impact on an individual's identity. Similar to critical race scholars, I contend that there are numerous myths that make up racial discourses. By extension, the literature on race and reintegration does not necessarily reflect the experiences of Black male ex-prisoners. Doing critical race criminology will enable me to explore how the construction of the 'other' surfaces during the resettlement of Black ex-prisoners. This in turn will lead me to understand how Black ex-prisoners are able to construct a self-concept.

In doing critical race criminology, I must examine the way that identity is related to being raced. Black is not only a signifier and a label. It is also a response to being raced. Once the Black label is applied, ideas about what it refers to begin to have their social effects and shape the way people conceive of themselves (Taylor, 1994; Waters, 1990). Identity is an important factor that influences the extent to which an individual is raced. Being raced creates a consensus among those labeled as Black as to who else falls under this label. Appiah succinctly states,

Labels can operate to shape what I want to call identification-- the process through which an individual intentionally shapes her projects- including her plans for her own life and her conception of the good-by reference to available identities (2000: 608).

Individuals can choose how central their Black identity will be in the organization of their lives. In this sense, they are actively racing themselves.

For Blacks, racial identification is hard to ignore because it is visible. This means that unless a person looks exceptionally different from other members of his or her racial group, strangers, friends and colleagues are always aware of it (Cornell, 1998; Goldberg, 1994). Also, in public and private contexts, race is often taken as the basis for treating people differently. Those who may not look Black might escape ascription to a degree. However, they may also choose to mark themselves racially as an act of affiliation, pride and political resistance. For example, supporters of the Black Power movement in the 1970's would wear "afros" not only to demonstrate that Black was beautiful. They were also challenging the normative construction of beauty, which historically excluded Blackness. In this sense, racial identity markers can promote a positive self-image and foster empowerment for Blacks while simultaneously serving to subvert oppressive normative constructions.

As critical race theorists argue, it is crucial for members of 'outgroups' to create their own shared understandings and meanings. Identity is an important variable because it can shape the way that Black male ex-prisoners respond to others. It can also determine how they conceive of themselves. A strong Black identity can serve as a valuable resource in the reintegration of these men. Doing critical race criminology will allow me to recognize the ways in which Black male ex-prisoners actively 'race' themselves.

When it comes to scholarship on race and race relations, there has been an undertheorization of the role of subjectivity (Mac an Ghaill, 1999). Being raced leads to the production of a set of narratives that are dispersed through a multiplicity of power relations (Rowbotham, 1989; Rutherford, 1990).

In accordance with critical race theorists, I see that it is necessary for marginalized groups like Blacks to contribute their stories into the "dominant gaze". Subjectivity is another factor that influences the extent to which an individual is raced. Social situations produce various subjective positions. However, being raced is central to the formation of these subjectivities. Being Black can be viewed as "a process of becoming characterized by fluidity, oppositions and alliances between particular narrative positions" (Mac an Ghaill 1999:53). Imprisonment and reintegration produces a range of social relations for Black male ex-prisoners. By doing critical race criminology, I will become aware of the range of subject positions that are influenced by a Black identity.

In the preceding discussion, I have laid out my strategy for engaging in critical race criminology by outlining the factors that contribute to being raced. Using critical race theory as my guide, I will trace the ways in which racism, the construction of the other, identity and subjectivity intersect to shape the reintegration experiences of Black male ex-prisoners. These theoretical assumptions guide the epistemological and methodological considerations that are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Epistemological and Methodological Considerations

Social scientists come to know and understand the complexity of human behaviour by using a variety of methodologies.
(Jackson, 1999:3).

This chapter is divided into four sections that position the research within broader epistemological questions while addressing my methodological framework. Part one is a reflective piece on the centrality of Blackness. Part two problematizes Euro-American epistemologies. This is followed by a discussion of my methodology-qualitative research and critical ethnography. The fourth and final section details the research methods employed and discusses the limitations of the research.

Part One: Reflections on Blackness

Racialized inclusions and exclusions are affirmed and legitimated within social institutions and cultural arenas, where symbolic systems and material practices systematically privilege dominant social groups (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 86).

The exclusion of Black voices from criminological discourse, especially within the context of Canadian academe led me to embark on an intellectual path, which places Blackness at the center of inquiry. I am employing research strategies that help me to uncover how being Black impacts the reintegration processes of Black male ex-prisoners in the Canadian context.

It would be dishonest to deny that my motivations for this research are political and personal. My identity as a Black woman and my political activism led me to conduct research that focused on Black ex-prisoners. Joseph Styles (1979) reminds academics that all research is riddled with value biases and preconceived notions about research subjects.

This case is no exception because my experience as a Black woman has influenced my decision to embark on this intellectual project. For several years, I have been a prisoner's rights advocate and most of the prisoners who I have interacted with have been Black males. Yet, I have sat through numerous criminology lectures and observed that discussions of race invariably focus on the plight of Aboriginals. Moreover, in the instances that Blacks are mentioned, they were discussed as though they are a homogeneous group with a uniform experience. This 'truth' being presented was one that I did not recognize. I felt excluded by my lack of legitimacy as a Black person who has been deviantized on countless occasions. Furthermore, I was saddened by the absence of Black voices in criminological discussions that centered on race. After this realization, I decided to search for stories that discussed the experiences of Blacks in Canada, particularly in relation to their criminalization and imprisonment.

In order to fully understand the significance of racial identification, I had to come to terms with my own understanding and construction of Blackness. Although I am aware that race is essentially a group identity imposed on individuals by others, I am also cognizant of its consequences, which include racism and inequality. But, what is Blackness? Is it simply the opposite of Whiteness? Do all members of this social category experience it the same way? As Manning Marable succinctly states:

Blackness is our sense of racial consciousness and pride in our heritage of resistance against racism. This identity is not something our oppressors forced upon us. It is a cultural and racial awareness we have collectively constructed for ourselves over hundreds of years (1999: 95).

It is simplistic to say that Blackness is about colour alone. Fanon (1968) argues that Blackness is about a shared history of colonization and oppression.

There is not a uniform definition of Blackness because the meanings that individuals in this group attach to it will differ according to variables such as culture, gender and class. However, Black is certainly a marked social category that forces individuals to become conscious of race.

Many Black scholars have engaged in a debate about the meaning of Blackness and the impact that it has on members who identify with this categorization (Anderson, 1995; Birt, 2002; Cokley, 2002; hooks, 1994; Mohanty, 1991; West, 1993). Some of these academics argue that embracing a Black identity can lead to Black racial essentialism. Cokley defines essentialism as "the doctrine that objects have essences or properties that are immutable" (2002: 35). Racial essentialism stipulates that the world consists of biologically distinct races that share essential traits. By extension, the Black racial essentialism doctrine says that essential attributes define the nature of all Black people. Farr (2002) critiques essentialist notions of Blackness and gives his own definition of what it means to be Black:

We are not Black because we share a certain set of essential or natural properties. We are Black because we share a history. That history is a history of ruins, brokenness, nothingness, a psychological, spiritual and existential void. We are (as Morrison points out) the invisible Africanist presence against which White identity is formed. Blackness is not merely skin colour, a style of music, and a style of speech, and so on, it is most significantly a type of pain, a particular historical catastrophe (p.19).

Black racial essentialism is problematic because there is a presumption that those who belong to this group should talk, walk and behave a certain way. Here I run into my own contradictions. On the one hand, I would like to think that I do not subscribe to essentialized notions of Blackness but at times I have found myself thinking that Blacks should be ideologically aligned on certain issues like apartheid and poverty.

For example, I have found it surprising when Black Americans vote for the Republican party in the elections. On the other hand, I have spoken out against people who make statements like "You are athletic because you are Black", or "All Black people are good dancers" or "Black women are exotic". Every day I struggle with my understanding and construction of Blackness and the seemingly inescapable ideological and political tensions that I live with as a Black woman. I am cognizant that it is challenging to be Black and study other Blacks.

Keeping all of this in mind, dilemmas often arise when the ethnographic "others" are from the same race as the researcher (Zavella and Arredondo, 2003: 47). This struggle is significant to me since I share the same racial background as my research subjects. Known as the "insider/outsider" dilemma, feminist researchers have been grappling with this issue while conducting fieldwork.

Styles (1979) distinguishes between insider and outsider myths. In summary, outsider myths argue that only outsiders can conduct legitimate research on a given group because they have the emotional distance and the necessary objectivity. Conversely, insider myths state that it is insiders that are in the best position to engage in research on given group because they have a shared understanding of the particular groups experience that outsiders will never be privy to.

In my case, I know that race is not the only 'social signifier' and it will not necessarily override other dimensions of differentiation. There are other factors that generate particular forms of social distance, including education, age, gender and class. Although my Black identity connects me to my research subjects, I must also consider the factors that create social distance.

I am not a male ex-prisoner and my social location is not based exclusively on my identification with Blackness. I am a middle class, educated Black woman and I can acknowledge that my position is privileged with respect to my research subjects. I share a history of racial oppression with my research subjects and this might equip me with a degree of sensitivity that an outsider simply would not possess. However, being an insider has its disadvantages. According to Zavella and Arredondo (2003), insiders are always held accountable by members of the group that they are studying and sometimes this puts pressure on them to formulate analyses that are positive. As Winndance Twine and Warren (2000) succinctly point out, as an insider, there may be a tendency to sanitize certain information. This is especially true in this context because as Black ex-prisoners, my research subjects are a vulnerable population who are frequently stereotyped.

Historically, the study of race and race relations has been the study of people of colour. Frequently in research, Whites do not seem to "have race" simply because Whiteness is typically an unmarked category. Duster (1999:22) reflects on this idea when he points out that some of his White colleagues in sociology have complained about what they see as the tendency of Black, Latino and Aboriginal students to do what they characterized as "mere autobiographical sociology". They are referring to the fact that many Black students want to study Black issues and Latino students frequently decide to examine Latino concerns. Studying one's own group can be messy because of the implicit bias that may arise. Ironically, what is particularly notable is that these same white colleagues were constantly studying the lives of White Americans with no reflexivity and awareness that race was indeed an important feature of their studies.

Part Two: Epistemological Assumptions: Critical Race Studies and Knowledge Claims

Questions of epistemology arise whenever research is being undertaken. How is knowledge created and legitimized? When approaching my research, it is crucial that I understand how knowledge materializes to become "truth". The construction of knowledge is critical to criminological and sociological understandings. Epistemology is the study of knowledge. "An epistemology is a system of knowing that has both an internal logic and external validity" (Ladson-Billings, 2003: 257). There are several different 'ways of knowing' but it is the process of understanding and possessing knowledge that lies at the heart of epistemology (Guy, 1997: 25). Some scholars (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Stanfield, 1993) have argued that Euro-American epistemological traditions have dominated the social sciences. This in turn has translated into a "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1977: 16) that has become widely accepted in academic circles. This is problematic because Euro-American epistemologies have become a hegemonic power in the transmission of knowledge. More specifically, certain populations have suffered and been silenced by these epistemological positions, which ignore other 'ways of knowing'. There is a need for counterknowledges to present different 'ways of knowing' so that new perspectives can become legitimating forces in academe.

Critical race epistemology attempts to do just that. Since social science knowledge is placed under close scrutiny when the focus is on sensitive political and social issues like race (Stanfield, 1993; Warren, 2000), critical race epistemology is premised upon the notion that "racial and colour hierarchies mediate social interactions" (Anderson, 1993: 5).

It is an attempt to understand the different ways in which race transforms social relations. Critical race scholars emphasize the need to move beyond the patriarchal and Eurocentric scholarship that often overlooks or minimizes the importance of race (Winndance et al., 2000; Alastair, 1996). They also attempt to uncover the social and political consequences of racial inequality. Lastly, critical race scholars acknowledge that race intersects with various other factors including class, culture, age, gender and ethnicity (Anderson, 1993; Entman, 1991; Stanfield, 1993).

Shujaa (1997) emphasizes that there is a strong relationship between epistemology and an individual's worldview. Keeping this in mind, critical race scholars attempt to construct a worldview that differs from the dominant Eurocentric worldview that traditionally characterizes social science research. The Euro American "regime of truth" is challenged by racialized and ethnic epistemologies (Ladson-Billings, 2003: 262). In fact, some scholars of colour have made a concerted effort to challenge the nature of truth because they argue that only certain authorities are able to claim the literal truth (Davis, 1981; Rosaldo, 1993; Winndance and Warren, 2000).

Shujaa (1997) adds to this criticism by arguing that Euro-American epistemology professes to be the only legitimate worldview. Critical race theory creates a space for other worldviews to be presented as legitimate and useful. Critical race scholars set out to create knowledge that reflects the experiences of racialized groups whose stories have often been excluded from Eurocentric epistemology. It is now important to turn to questions of methodology to show the steps that were taken to extract pertinent information from my research subjects.

Part Three: Methodological Foundations: Qualitative Research and the Role of Critical Ethnography

Since I am interested in the way that situations are perceived and interpreted by individuals in context (Palys, 1992), a qualitative approach is appropriate, particularly in light of the exploratory nature of my research. Palys refers to qualitative inquiry as a human centered approach whereby social scientists try to understand the lived realities of their subjects. The meaning that participants attach to their experiences are then incorporated into the analysis of the researcher. Jackson (1999:50) says, "qualitative research emphasizes verbal descriptions and explanations of human behaviour". In this instance, I wanted to give black male ex-prisoners the opportunity to verbally reflect on their experiences of incarceration and reintegration. By contextualizing their experiences, their understanding of race in turn informs the research.

Qualitative investigation is an attempt to increase the range and scope of data in order to expose deeper understandings and multiple realities of a certain phenomenon (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). I adopted this approach because it could assist me in exploring race as a phenomenon while helping me to uncover the factors that enable black male ex-prisoners to facilitate a successful re-entry after long term imprisonment. The firsthand accounts of Black male ex-prisoners serve to illustrate how race gets played out before and after their release from federal penitentiaries.

Qualitative research brings forward unquantifiable facts about research subjects (Berg, 1995). Some qualitative researchers argue that quantitative measurement creates an uncomfortable social distance between the observer and the observed. They note that qualitative investigation is preferable because it helps to lessen the gap between the researcher and the research subject. By adopting a qualitative lens, I am not trying to

make generalizations about the role of race in the reintegration of Black ex-prisoners. Instead, I am striving to create new interpretations about this subject in anticipation that the richness of the information can promote further criminological inquiry. Moving on, I will demonstrate how and why I am able to bring the narratives of Black male ex-prisoners to the forefront.

I am inspired by ethnographic research, which acknowledges that social realities are not independent of the observer (Reinharz, 1992). Ethnography reveals the importance of social context by assessing the perceptions of research participants and representing these observations as accounts. Essentially, ethnography attempts to "describe and interpret social expressions" (Berg, 1995:47). In ethnographic research, the perspectives of research subjects are paramount because interpretations arise from the meanings they give to their experiences. It is important to remember that ethnographic research is the product of interaction between the observer and the observed (Clifford, 1980). Consequently, the researcher should not attempt to separate himself or herself from the research process, assuming the cloak of scientific 'objectivity'. As I already noted, I am very aware that my own biography affects my interviews with Black male ex-prisoners. In fact, our lived histories combine to construct a social reality that materializes into research.

This research is largely informed by the ideas of critical ethnography. Influenced by feminism, critical ethnography strives to give a voice to populations who have historically been excluded from academic discourse (Bender, 1990; Reinharz, 1992).

By documenting the lives of research subjects and using their narratives as a foundation for the research, critical ethnography attempts to bring the knowledge of the oppressed to the forefront (Reinharz, 1992:50). An effort is made to acquire a better understanding of the research participants' subjectivities in order to place them within their social contexts. The lived realities of diverse populations are potentially captured when critical ethnography is employed (Gurney, 1995; Haggis, 1997).

Thomas (1993) states that "Critical ethnography is a way of applying a subversive worldview to the conventional logic of cultural inquiry" (p.18). Unlike conventional ethnography, which provides a descriptive analysis of culture, critical ethnography has a political purpose. There is a conscious attempt by critical ethnographers to use knowledge in order to affect social change. As previously mentioned, critical ethnography tries to bring the voices of socially marginalized groups into the limelight. But it goes beyond that by invoking social consciousness about subjects that are often ignored (Thomas, 1993). The personal accounts of Black male ex-prisoners can provide me with a better understanding of how race affects their experiences of reintegration. By revealing their perceptions of imprisonment and re-entry, the voices of this marginalized group will emerge. Furthermore, the social contexts that facilitate their successful reintegration will become clear.

Many critical social scientists, especially those engaging in critical race scholarship (Merkel-Meadow, 1992; Williams, 1991; Wing, 2001) emphasize the need to include marginalized groups into mainstream academic discourse. As mentioned previously, the current institutional literature on race and reintegration largely excludes the stories and experiences of marginalized groups, like Black ex-prisoners.

With critical ethnography as my theoretical guide, I hope to capture the lived realities of Black ex-prisoners as active agents. By engaging in the interview process with them, their personal narratives are bringing subjugated knowledge into the spotlight. This in turn serves to expand the existing literature on race and reintegration.

Part Four: Methods

I was able to conduct this research thanks to SHRCC funding of a project entitled *Release and Reintegration after Prison: Negotiating Gender, Culture and Identity*. This project was spearheaded by my thesis supervisors: Professor Sylvie Frigon and Professor Christine Bruckert. This three year venture examines the process and experience of release from prison and focuses on the long term effects of incarceration. The objective is to enable ex-prisoners to reflect on their experiences of imprisonment and reintegration in order to get a better understanding of the conditions that facilitate a successful transition from prison to the community. Interviews for this project have been conducted with three primary groups, ex-prisoners, criminal justice professionals and partners of ex-prisoners. My thesis is being included in this project as a small sub-section and I added the dimension of race to the research.

(1) Interviewing: Creating the Guide

The data was obtained through in depth semi-structured interviews. An open-ended interview guide was already devised by the researcher's conducting the project on *Release and Reintegration after Prison: Negotiating Gender, Culture and Identity* (See Appendix C).

In order to answer my research questions, the interview guide was adapted to tailor to issues of race. The interview guide included questions about racial identity and racism in prison so that respondents could reflect on their experience and articulate their stories. Other questions were developed to address whether institutional programming was sensitive to issues of race and culture. There were also inquiries made into the available support systems for Black male ex-prisoners.

In order to gather detailed material about the ways in which race shapes the reintegration of Black ex-prisoners, I conducted four semi-structured interviews that lasted between an hour and a half and two hours. This method of intensive interviewing was applied because it revealed the perceptions and understandings of my research subjects. Their firsthand accounts enabled me to identify themes and formulate hypotheses while ensuring that the voices of ex-prisoners remained at the forefront of my research.

In-depth interviews are particularly useful when the target population is clearly defined (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). In this case, Black male ex-prisoners were an easily identifiable group that I chose to approach. During in-depth interviews, the researcher and respondent are aware that the verbal exchange has a specific purpose. In this instance, I wanted to generate narratives that focused on the relationship between race and the reintegration process. Although in-depth interviews are supposed to be free-flowing interactions, I frequently probed the participants as a strategy for getting at pertinent information. Each interview was transcribed verbatim.

(2) Access and Recruitment

Snowball sampling techniques were used to gain access to ex-prisoners. This was thought to be the most appropriate method because generally, ex-prisoners are a difficult population to access. Initial contacts were made through Lifeline and personal networks. A description of the research project was sent to various organizations that have close contacts with Black male ex-prisoners. These included B.I.F.A. (Black Inmates Friendship Assembly), Anarchist Black Cross, The Black Coalition of Quebec and Black Cap. Individuals who were interested in participating contacted me to schedule an interview.

Surprisingly, I encountered many difficulties trying to gain access to my sample. I assumed that B.I.F.A. would easily be able to identify interviewees for me. However, they were unable to supply me with any research subjects. In fact, one woman told me that the individuals that fit the criteria for my research were being deported. Another man whom I had contact with from B.I.F.A. said that he could not find anyone who was willing to participate. I was shocked because Toronto has a sizable Black ex-prisoner population yet it was in Montreal that I ended up conducting all my interviews. This experience reminded me how risky a research project becomes when you are dealing with human subjects. Indeed, I suffered several setbacks because it took such a long time for me to find research participants.

(3) Sample and Selection

Participation in the research was limited to Black male federal ex-prisoners for a number of reasons.

Since I am looking at how race conditions reintegration, it made sense to focus on individuals who identified with the same racial group. Men are easier to access because they are the majority of the prison population. The research sample consisted of Black male ex-prisoners who had served a term of imprisonment in a Canadian federal institution. One of the criteria for participation in this study was that participants had been living in the community for a period of five years or more. Interviews were conducted in Kingston and Montreal but I was only able to use the data from the Montreal interviews.

The core findings of my research stem from four semi-structured interviews with primary respondents conducted over two and a half years. My four primary participants are Black men between their late thirties and early forties. All of them are Canadian citizens. Two are from the Caribbean; Barbados, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The other two were born in Canada, Halifax and Montreal. One of them has a post secondary-education and two of them have finished high school. The other one says that he is 'self-educated.' All of them are currently employed and two of them have children.

(4) Ethics

As previously noted, my research was a subsection of a broader project entitled *Release and Reintegration after Prison: Negotiating Gender, Culture and Identity* (See Appendix A). A revised interview guide was submitted to the University of Ottawa Social Sciences Humanities Research Ethics Board in November, 2003. After that was approved, I proceeded to conduct interviews with ex-prisoners. At the beginning of each interview, a consent form was provided to the participant (see Appendix B).

It was made clear that this research and researcher has no affiliation with the Correctional Services of Canada as a protective measure to ensure that they would not feel pressure to participate for fear of negative repercussions.

Research participants were given an honorarium of \$50 for their time and to cover travel and child care costs. The honorarium was given to them at the beginning of the interview and participants could keep the money regardless if they decided to withdraw from the interview prematurely. Pseudonyms were used and identifiable information was altered to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents. Nonetheless, a major ethical dilemma occurred.

Social scientists have a responsibility to exercise a high level of care because they delve into the personal lives of others (Jackson, 1999). Since I was interviewing human subjects about sensitive issues, confidentiality was crucial. However, I soon found out that it can never be guaranteed. I discovered that it is not easy to predict ethical dilemmas that might arise. In fact, I accidentally left two of my audiocassettes of taped interviews on a public bus. I was especially worried because Black ex-prisoners are a particularly vulnerable group and one of the reasons they gave their consent is because they trusted me. That trust was jeopardized when this unfortunate incident occurred. I had to phone the two participants and explain what had transpired. Even though I was confident that whoever took the audiocassettes probably did not have the proper equipment to listen to the interviews, I had to tell them that I could not guarantee that the tapes would not be heard. I assured them that the transcripts would be destroyed immediately. I set out to make sure that my research subjects would not be harmed but I realized that they might respond unfavorably to me after learning about the incident.

Luckily, both men were very understanding and sympathized with my situation.

However, this meant that I was unable to use two interviews, which reduced my sample from six participants to four. This was another setback for me because as mentioned previously, it was particularly difficult for me to gain access to my research sample. The next section outlines the procedures through which I interpreted, coded and processed my findings from the above methods.

(5) Examining Narratives

Through story telling and counterstorytelling, the narratives of Black ex-prisoners emerged. The stories of Black ex-prisoners are understood not as singular accounts or examples but as "social events that instruct us about social processes, social structures and social situations" (Maines and Bridger: 1992:207). Narrative extends the power of speaking to those who were once considered "people without voice". In addition, by staking claim to personal narrative, Headley states, "oppressed peoples are able to create their own sphere of theorized existence and thus remove themselves from the marginalized position to which the dominant society has relegated them" (2002:55). Narrative is of utmost importance in this context because I am attending to the words used by my research subjects in order to describe and explain their incarceration and resettlement into their respective communities. In addition, it is useful to explore how race conditions incarceration and reintegration. For instance, how does racism affect their experience of imprisonment? How is their racial identity affected in prison? Were there correctional programs that were culturally sensitive to their needs?

Exploring these questions is an integral part of my research. As critical race theorists argue, "our social world with its rules, practices and assignments of prestige and power is not fixed; rather we construct it with words and silence" (Delgado: 1995:15). Indeed, I am attempting to assist Black prisoners so that they can claim a space for their stories to be heard.

(6) Analyzing the Data

I decided to conduct an interview analysis of my four semi-structured interviews in an attempt to flesh out the meaning that my respondents were conveying. Through this process, I wanted to center the voices of these Black ex-prisoners so that they would come across as authorities on the topic of race and reintegration. As Doucet and Mauthner argue: "Data analysis presents researchers with the challenge of keeping respondents' voices and perspectives alive, while at the same time recognizing the researcher's role in shaping the research process and product" (2002:123).

In explaining how I made sense of the data, the ensuing discussion addresses the dilemmas I encountered in doing the analysis of the interviews. Before engaging in an analysis of the data, I had to listen to each interview several times. It was important for me to pay attention to the tone of voice because it can be indicative of sarcasm, sadness or even anger. The way words are said by an individual can change their meaning so it was crucial for me to observe pauses in speech, sighing and even laughter. I wrote extensive notes on each interview in order to get a better understanding of the information that my research participants were trying to convey. All of these steps assisted me in the process of interpreting the interviews.

Data analysis is an arduous task and one of the ways to do this effectively is by finding themes that emerge from the interview. Since I already knew that I was applying 'critical race criminology'. I made it a point to identify the instances in which subjectivity, identity, racism and the construction of the other were discussed. I went through each transcript systematically and wrote down every time a research participant addressed these themes. In addition, I noted when other themes emerged. For example, I began to notice that all of my interviewees were mentioning the role that community played during their imprisonment and reintegration. Consequently, I decided to make community support a category on its own. After I finished identifying themes, I organized all of the information into charts. I noticed similarities and differences in the responses of my sample. Subsequently, I arranged my data by coupling appropriate quotes with the recurring themes and key concepts.

At first, there were three major headings: before imprisonment, during imprisonment and after incarceration. In many ways, analysis is about trial and error and I soon realized that those charts were not working for me. Keeping in mind that my research was focusing on incarceration and reintegration, I finally decided that the information on my charts would be divided into three sections: race and imprisonment, race and reintegration, and identity. Interview analysis is by no means an exact science. Indeed, it is a rigorous process that requires the author to acknowledge that his or her social location may influence the research findings.

Throughout this challenging process, I recognized that analysis is not an objective science and that my interpretation is necessarily subjective. It is impossible to separate my own feelings about race and reintegration from the analysis of my interviews.

However, I have attempted to remain self-reflexive and self-critical for the duration of my research. Data analysis enabled me to 'make sense' of the information I collected in order to present it in a manner that is coherent and logical.

(7) Research Limitations

Every research project has its limitations and my research is no exception. I can not claim to be representative of Black male ex-prisoners because my sample is very small. Conducting interviews is always risky because the researcher must rely on his or her research subjects. It was very difficult to access Black male ex-prisoners especially since I chose not to go through Correctional Services of Canada. Because of the personal nature of my research, some Black male ex-prisoners who fit the criteria chose not to participate. Asking individuals to open up about a difficult experience can result in a negative response. It is not easy to recount the pains of imprisonment so it is understandable that potential research participants elected not to take part.

Even though the interviews were transcribed verbatim, I am interpreting them and only using certain quotes. This means that I do not fully capture the essence of the interviews. Instead, I am reformulating the content of the interviews so that I can create a logical academic text. To an extent, the authenticity of the narratives is lost in the process. I am very aware that imposing meaning on the responses of individuals can be problematic. In other words, the research participants do not have much control over how their narratives are presented.

I must not forget that an interview occurs at a particular social moment and it is only a snapshot of the respondent's life.

It is impossible for me to get a complete picture of the reintegration process in two hours. Moreover, the dynamic that develops between the researcher and the research subject is contingent on the interview process. Consequently, respondents who felt more comfortable with me might have given me more details. It is also important to be aware that some respondents are more articulate than others. This means that the information in one interview may be richer than the information in another.

Conducting interviews are one way of producing evidence but no interview can be exhaustive. Did the respondents give a truthful report on their life circumstances? Did they express themselves in an authentic fashion? It is often a risk when a researcher must trust his or her research subjects. Respondents may tailor their responses to suit what they think the researcher is trying to achieve. Although I believe my research subjects have been genuine in their responses, I have no way of verifying all of the information they have provided me with.

An additional issue is that all of my respondents live in Montreal and they have been through the Quebec prison system. Since I was unable to use the interviews I conducted in Ontario, my research is quite limited. This research cannot sufficiently examine how race affects different Black ex-prisoners depending on their province of residence. Although my analysis outlines some of the strategies employed by my respondents in order to facilitate a smooth transition into their communities, this is not a complete account of the ways in which race conditions their reintegration. The preceding discussion illustrates that research is value-laden especially when it is dictated by time and length constraints.

CHAPTER 4

Issues, Insights and Challenges: Analysis of Narratives

In the previous chapter, I outlined my methodology. I now proceed to weave my analysis by putting 'Critical Race Criminology' into practice. In Part one, I begin by reviewing the theoretical framework for my research: critical race theory. Following this, I situate my research subjects to set the stage for the analysis of their narratives. Part three consists of a discussion about how my research subjects experiences of imprisonment were informed by race. More specifically, it addresses the ways in which individual, cultural and institutional racism impacted the lives of my respondents while they were in prison. In addition, some of the individual tactics that my interviewees have adopted to cope with their oppression are addressed. Part four is intended to show the relationship between race and reintegration. In this discussion the obstacles facing my respondents after their release from prison are explored. I also highlight the role of race in enriching the lives of these Black ex-prisoners and helping them to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Finally, I move on to the topic of identity in order to explore how my interviewees are able to manage their self-concept as 'raced' individuals who continue to be affected by their experiences of incarceration. Although my literature review and theoretical chapter emphasize that my research subjects are disadvantaged as Black ex-prisoners, their stories reveal that they have exercised a degree of control over their lives as racialized individuals.

Part One: Revisiting Critical Race Theory

As discussed in Chapter Two, the theoretical framework for this research is Critical Race Theory (CRT). My goal is to give voice to the narratives of Black ex-prisoners by examining their experiences of reintegration after a federal term of imprisonment. CRT promotes the experiential knowledge of Blacks as being central to the understanding of subordinated groups (Solozarno: 1998). Keeping this in mind, CRT strives to accentuate and empower the powerless by making the invisible visible. Critical race scholars employ story telling and counterstorytelling as a method to create an arena for the voices of marginalized populations, mainly Blacks. For them, the analysis of narratives enables this process to materialize. In this chapter, I will explore the "complexities of race" through the stories of my research subjects.

Part Two: Contextualizing the Discussion: Situating My Research Subjects

In order to get a better image of my research subjects, I will introduce you to them through their own words. Their names are Bernie, Jerry, Spirit and Virgo. I will start with Bernie who is a soft-spoken Black man in his late thirties. Bernie had not spoken to anyone about his imprisonment for years and it was evident that discussing this topic was a painful exercise for him. He reflects on his imprisonment:

Physically, I was in really bad shape (..) I was going through withdrawal and I was severely medicated and I was coming off of heroin and cocaine and then um (..) it's really hard to talk about. Um I mean, emotionally, I was just beaten down (..) I was extremely anxious and even though I had only for a few years (...) it was a lot of pressure for me (..) they try to keep you down and you got no hope and (..) I could see myself eventually getting to suicidal thoughts (..) Well, I just used in jail (..) I mean, whatever I could get my hands on (..) that's how I coped at that time (Bernie).

The stories of these Black ex-prisoners reveal that prison had a profound impact on their lives. Jerry is a forty-something father of five who is very articulate and came across as being genuine.

You know I would think (..) the way I see it, I went to jail and even if uh the penalty was harsh (..) I took it as a reform school from the get go. I forgot to say there's a spiritual but I also took it as a reform school. I was an older guy. I was not 22, 24, 19. I was 30 and it's like I understood.. what are you doing destroying yourself and destroying everyone. I had kids. I already had two kids at that time that were growing up and you know seeing their father (Jerry).

Spirit is an outspoken Black man with a commanding presence. He reflects on re-entry into the community:

I just wanted to know that I'm going to fall back into society without being like disturbed (..) The only thing I was scared of (..) you know, not going to prison before, I hear prisoners (..) I hear people saying that uh (..) oh you can become like (..) you can become like one of those guys that keeps going back to prison. I was just worried about that (Spirit).

Virgo is an athletic Black man who seems to be very grounded but feisty. He speaks passionately about his experiences of incarceration and resettlement. Coming out of prison alive was a big accomplishment for him:

I can stand up for myself now and a lot of my fears, I've stepped on. So I've stepped on the positive fear I find. The next fear is death (..) You know and I'm not really afraid of death anymore so I used to be you know. I had the biggest fear was going to prison. And I seen a lot in prison and I survived it. It's all turmoil and havoc in there (Virgo).

These Black ex-prisoners share a social location that is largely defined by race but their interviews reveal that each of them is unique. They are by no means a homogeneous group with a one-dimensional understanding of race. Instead, they are able to recall their imprisonment and reintegration with insight and poise. Their different personalities are reflected in their stories.

The narratives of my research participants provide a snapshot of their experiences of imprisonment and resettlement. The following themes were identified from their personal accounts: racism, construction of the 'other', stigma, race as a resource, identity, subjectivity, correctional support and outside support. Each of these areas will be addressed in this discussion. The chapter is divided into three major sections: race and imprisonment, race and reintegration, and identity.

Part Three: Race and Imprisonment

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have stated that racism in the Canadian penal system is an important issue with significant consequences, especially for my respondents who have been traumatized by its crippling effects. In spite of this Black ex-prisoners are usually excluded from academic and institutional discourses about race. The stories of my interviewees reveal that race and racism play a central role in their incarceration and reintegration.

(1) Prison Struggles

Racial formation is a process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized. Race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world (Omi and Winant: 1994:115).

Prison is a racialized social structure and the stories of my research subjects reflect that as Black prisoners, they had a heightened sense of racial awareness.

So basically in the wing I was, there was not many Blacks..they were all in wing EF they were all in EF so there was a few that I remember (Jerry).

Well, you had the ethnics, you had the French, Black and you had a little bit of the Asian and you had some of the White (Bernie).

These comments suggest that race operates at the level of everyday life during the imprisonment of my research participants. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we often 'notice' race. My respondents were immediately aware that they were visible minorities in prison because of their membership in a racial category. This racial consciousness persisted throughout their incarceration:

It's always a challenge being Black in prison and at that time, there was only like maybe twelve of us in the whole prison system of 500 so the main problem rests in the (...) I'm afraid of being jumped and killed and that's everyday stuff (Virgo).

Virgo's comments indicate that he was aware of how many other Black prisoners were in the institution. Furthermore, he makes the link between race and violence in prison. His comments suggest that race adds another dimension to an atmosphere that is already extremely violent. The oppression of violence lies in the constant fear that violence may occur, solely on the basis of one's racial identity. Jerry comments on the dangerousness of the prison environment:

You have to be careful with the other inmates. You have to be careful with what you say at what time and to who and I'm talking amongst inmates. That's one of the biggest ones because you can get in deep, deep problems if you, you know, step on someone's foot at the wrong time you know (Jerry).

As prisoners who are inescapably raced, my interviewees are able to discuss the realities of racially motivated violence in prison. Virgo recalls being a victim of a racially motivated attack:

And two White guys tried to kill me. And Oh God, I'm getting stabbed in the side you know. Yeah, through all that, you know, I still managed to (...) to come through (...) Uh, this one guy, he was calling me a nigger and I kinda stood up for myself and I wasn't used to doing that, you know. I said who you calling nigger? And nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, and he's got enough tough guys. I was the only Black guy in the wing at the time (...) and these three White guys try to kill me. So they waited till (...) So I went to the weight room and I was doing the bench press, and..uh..one guy came over my head and he hit me in my head with a steel bar, you know, and said "die you fucking nigger" and..uh as he hit me in the head,

I remember saying "God, please don't let me die in this place. If you don't let me die here, Lord I promise I'll never give up and I'll always try to do my best" I said all of that just in the span of seconds (..) You know he hit me bam (..) when I said all that, then he tried to hit me again. And he beat me for the second time but not as hard as the first time. (..) Then they were supposed to come over..stab me, finish me, and walk away and leave the Black guy there dead (Virgo).

After this racist attack, Virgo explains how the guards responded to him:

And then the guards all rush in and they jump on me (..) It was really weird. They tackled me down (..) Yeah I was up but you know..I was bleeding (Virgo).

From these comments, it would appear that the guards assumed he was the attacker.

Virgo's graphic account unveils the racist atmosphere that some Black ex-prisoners are exposed to. Racial violence in prison does not only involve physical attacks. It also includes harassment, ridicule and intimidation.

Black prisoners can be understood as "social products in that they are formed and transformed by the defining process that takes place in social interaction, the ways in which others act toward them and just as important, the ways in which others produce images and ideas about who they are." (Childs:2005:44).

In terms of Black inside (..) Yeah, well it's rough. Well, I wasn't recommended by the parole officer. They didn't believe I was..they still thought I had "pensées magique" (..)magical thoughts which I always do because that's just the way (..) I'm a Libra and I'm going to be a dreamer from time to time and for them, they never recommended me as a Black person. And you know, I did all the steps that were asked of me...even extra ones (...) So obviously for me, it was yes I'm Black and they obviously, they don't trust us. That's what I can say. I never felt trusted (..) But I could see sometimes they let guy's go..this one..oh man, he did terrible things and he's out. You find the injustice. But there was no trust with me and even though I did everything they asked. (Jerry).

Jerry's comments resonate with those of Omi and Winant who articulate: "A racialized social structure shapes racial experiences and conditions meaning" (1994:120).

For my respondents, as 'raced' individuals struggling in an oppressive environment that is racially and otherwise hostile towards them, their perception about social interactions and events are conditioned by their understanding of race and how it operates in a correctional setting. Jerry's comments are also a reminder that racist institutional practices may serve to subordinate particular racial groups so that dominant groups can maintain their power and exercise control over them. This is why CRT adherents are particularly interested in "legal manifestations of White supremacy and the perpetuation of the subordination of people of colour" (Wing:2001:3). These manifestations of White supremacy can be observed in the prison.

The system itself, I don't it really..it's not really there for you(..) and uh especially as a Black man (..) So I mean (..) Well, it's just..I mean, when I got in there, I figured pretty much..figured out pretty quickly how it was going to be for me (..) And that I was kind of second class or third class citizen in the system and I looked at the White guys who were getting what they wanted (..) It was just something that I accepted. (..) So whenever I would ask for something or I would apply for something especially inside, I would have that kind of..don't do that..double standard..cause I was Black (Bernie).

These comments suggest that Bernie believed that even the minimal privileges granted to White prisoners were not being afforded to him because he was Black. He is referring to the difficulties he faced when he was making requests to use the phone and receive visits. His comments resonate with Anthias and Davis (1993), who argue that continual racial subjugation can cause Blacks to accept the manifestations of racism. This is yet another way for the dominant group to assert their power in penal institutions. As a Black prisoner receiving differential treatment, there is a sense of powerlessness that may develop.

In addition, when Bernie talks about being a second or third class citizen, this suggests that even though all prisoners lose their status, there is still a hierarchy in prison, which grants certain groups more privileges than others.

Racist institutional practices are not only used to deny Black prisoners the basics, they can also result in Black prisoners being denied parole, which prolongs their sentence. Institutional racism is particularly dangerous because it is covert, subtle and less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. In this exchange, it is clear that Jerry believed that his continued incarceration was directly linked to his race:

Anne: And how did they justify that... giving you four more months?

Jerry: The same..the same kind of profile they had of me..saying my instability, my association..totally..

Anne: Association with who?

Jerry: With Blacks..you know, like reggae world and music and drugs. For them, it's a lot of criminality. That was always the profile.

Anne: That's what they used?

Jerry: All the time. All the time.

When Black is identified with risk by the institution, this can be reflected in policies and procedures that treat this group differently. State bodies like the Parole Board may appear to act in a value-free and neutral manner, however, by associating a particular profile with a specific racial group they are perpetuating racism. In other words, racialized discourses sometimes incorporate pre-existing negative judgements and categorizations about Blackness and these judgements may be used to construct rules and institutional structures that subordinate them further.

The preceding discussion has highlighted some of the conventional ways that racism affects the lives of my respondents in the prison context.

My findings support another manifestation of racism that was reported about by the *Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System*: "A more subtle, but no less real, form of racism behind bars is the denial and/or contempt for the cultures and cultural identities of prisoners from black and other racial minority communities (1994:23)". These comments are reflected in Jerry's narrative. He observes that the correctional system seemed threatened by his Rastafarian culture throughout his incarceration.

I still had my long hair (...) yeah my dreadlocks so obviously (...) um you know and I was still saying, "I'm going to be in the reggae" and reggae to them is like drugs so that's why they could never see the progress in me (...) Well, just by not understanding our..you know my culture or my situation (...) My PO just skeptical (...) same skepticism that was there the whole time and you're (...) I think the answer you want to get (...) why is it that they were skeptical the whole time if you did all the right things (...) I think it will come back to the question..mainly, mainly my dreads, my association with saying, "This is my music. This is my culture..(Jerry)

Jerry's comments resonate with writers Currie and Kiefl (1994:17) who argue:

One aspect to justice is the requirement for cultural sensitivity in the administration of justice and the provision of justice-related services. Treatment with fairness, dignity and respect by a powerful institution is the *sine qua non* of justice. It is the symbolic core of the concept of justice.

Although prison officials are obligated to give prisoners opportunities to practice their culture with dignity, it appears that Jerry was denied that right. In this instance, the Rastafarianism culture was being constructed as 'other', meaning deviant and criminal.

In all of my interviews, my respondents expressed their frustration with being perceived as different and 'other'. As noted in my theoretical chapter, 'othering' is a phenomenon that dominant groups use in order to construct marginalized populations as lesser and inferior (Said, 1978).

Representations of otherness are powerful tools because images about what Blackness constitutes can result in serious consequences. Racialized discourses do not only manifest themselves in texts and ideologies (Young, 1990). They also get played out in the criminal justice system where stereotypical images of Blacks often become societal beliefs. Consequently, it is extremely difficult for my respondents to combat these constructions of otherness.

Virgo explains:

You're stereotyped (...) you know..people right away ain't gonna give you the benefit of the doubt [right] because you look the part. You look like a criminal- you're Black, you know. I'm not saying all Black people are criminals but I'm saying you fit into a slot. That's the idea they have (Virgo).

My respondents are aware that they have been depicted as criminals because they are Black. They are cognizant that this construction of the 'other' influences the way they are treated in the carceral environment by prison officials and other prisoners. In the following discussion, my research subjects recall some of the strategies they have adopted in an attempt to resist their oppression.

(2) Resisting Oppression

The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction. it is the experience of being caged in: all avenues, in every direction are blocked or booby trapped (Heldke and O'Connor, 2004:185).

Discussions of racism and how it has been used to disempower Black ex-prisoners would be incomplete without recognition of their individual acts of resistance in response to their oppression.

Throughout the torture and indignities of slavery for example, Black men and women resisted their capture and challenged the conditions of bondage once transported to the United States and Canada (Palmer: 2000). Similarly, my informants insist that they have resisted their oppression.

Um the correctional system, I was kind of like fuck you! I really didn't care (....) I mean, I passively aggressively resisted two appointments and could have destroyed my entire future (....)(Bernie).

Marginalized groups in prison will sometimes use aggression as a way of asserting control over their environment (Johnson, 2003). Spirit for instance explains that he would disrespect the guards and try to get the message across that they could not push him around:

I would resist by being tough with the guards. [Mmhmm] You know, when I see the guard, I would give the guards a tough look. That's when I walked beside them, I would pump them with my shoulder..you know, I would like uh..at one point, I said to some guards at uh..uh..whatever that place is there..where they keep you..uh Partenais..I called them you motherfucker you son of a bitch [Oh wow!] and a whole bunch of them came and you know..took my clothes away and put me in the hole and tried to intimidate me like if they wanted to like jump me (Spirit).

Spirit's comments illustrate that although engaging in acts of resistance in prison can result in dire consequences for prisoners, he was able to exercise power in an institution that strips individuals of their autonomy.

Black men are oppressed as a group long before they enter the prison system. As 'raced' individuals, they have already experienced racism prior to having contact with the criminal justice system. Jerry reflects on his childhood:

When I was a kid, I was left out (..) I was the only Black, I was called all kinds of names where I grew up going to school and so on (Jerry).

My respondents inform me that prison is simply a continuation of racial struggle for them.

Spirit chose to defy his keepers by being physically aggressive whereas, Jerry decided to take a more formal approach. It was mentioned earlier that Jerry's sentence was prolonged unnecessarily. Although the Parole Board did not explicitly say that he was being denied parole because he was Black, he believed that their decision was a racist one so he fought back:

The fighting back? I think I wrote a couple of letters stating (....) I do remember writing some pretty heavy letters about everything (...) the steps I had done [o.k.] and why (..) sending it to the National Parole Board [right] why I should be released (Jerry).

Virgo was determined to defy his oppressors by never returning to prison:

You know because I was average all the time and in prison, they made it feel like I would never amount to anything saying, "you'll be back, you're a criminal and you'll be back," you know. But I ain't gonna be back because I am not a criminal (Virgo).

Initially, this may not seem like an act of resistance but Virgo is psychologically resisting his oppression by verbalizing that he will succeed upon his re-entry into the community.

Resistance manifests itself in different ways.

The stories of my research subjects reveal that they resisted their imprisonment and racism simultaneously despite the numerous obstacles they were confronted with. As Fredrick Douglass articulates:

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical, but there must be a struggle (Mullaly: 2002: 49).

The accounts of my respondents suggest that racist language, attitudes and policies plague the environments of some Canadian penal institutions. Through their stories, the relationship between race and imprisonment becomes clear.

When they are released from prison, my research subjects explain that the burden of racism continues to condition their experiences. Jerry makes this connection:

There is racism a lot amongst the inmates. That's how they keep us divided. It's a micro society just like society out here. You got the same battles (Jerry).

In the next discussion, the relationship between race and reintegration is explored through the words of these Black ex-prisoners.

Part Four: Race and Reintegration

(1) Battling Reentry

At this point, I am switching lenses in order to discuss how race impacted the reintegration of my respondents. The comments of my interviewees support the literature on re-entry, which emphasizes that all ex-prisoners face multiple barriers to success (Travis, 2005; Travis and Waul, 2003).

Um yeah.. like I said, the first year I was extremely fragile. It was so easy for me to regress (...) And I wasn't sure if I was going to go back to my old lifestyle or I was going to actually do this. I mean, up until I did my program. I was so down and so depressed that uh I didn't think I had any kind of future long term (Bernie).

Out there I felt lost. There wasn't much opportunity for me to do out there (..) and then I'd have to start at the bottom (..) and I'm going back to uh..a neighbourhood where everyone around is deprived you know. They don't have much (Virgo).

Like other ex-prisoners, my respondents noted that securing housing, food and employment is a major challenge:

In terms of my small income, I wasn't able to feed myself. I had to rely on food banks and centres um and stuff like that um (..) I had to find a job. I was kind of just disoriented. I was confused. All I wanted to do was be alone and uh..I didn't feel like I had those opportunities because of the amount of pressure I felt I was getting from everybody (Bernie).

As 'raced' ex-prisoners, my research subjects emphasized that racism is a reality that they continue to face when they re-enter the community. These Black ex-prisoners remain targets of racism during their reintegration and this makes their resettlement into the community even more difficult. Spirit recalled being stopped by police officers after he was released from prison:

When they got me, they fuckin beat me up and everything (...) Yeah..told me "We're going to dump you here. Fuck..we're going to kill you..fuckin nigger..we're going to fucking dump you, you want to fuckin run away from us."
(Spirit)

All of my respondents revealed that criminal justice agents scared them. It was no longer prisoners committing racially motivated attacks against them. Now, these men feared law enforcement agents: "Even today I still get stared down by cops' (...) I mean they know (...) cause I know everybody's watching me" (Bernie). My research subjects express that they are cautious when it comes to dealing with police officers. As a result of his negative experiences with police, Spirit makes a conscious effort to be compliant when he comes into contact with them:

Well my challenges was to like uh when the cops, when the cops come up on you (..) and they're like, "Who are you?" Well, I just had to know that the police, you have to respect them because they're the law and they're doing their job and you know, you have to have self-control (..) you know to maintain (..) you know what I mean? So if you don't want to contain yourself with good manner, then you're gonna go back. So you have to deal with all the opposition that was there (..) you deal with it (..) which is total self-control if you want to reel yourself back properly (Spirit).

My respondents recognize that social control agents have an enormous amount of power over them. Jerry notes that he deliberately moved to an area where he was not known by police. Again, it is evident that experiences of racism and harassment influence the actions of these Black ex-prisoners.

Two of my respondents revealed that they were sent to therapeutic institutions upon their release from prison. Bernie said that the pervasiveness of racism had a profound affect on him during his stay at a rehabilitation centre:

When one of my White peers felt threatened, then they would use the racism card (...) verbal abuse, um setting me up to fail..um provoking me..um sending other White racists against me (...) I saw how hard and difficult it was for my Black peer group and I saw how they were shunned and I saw how people didn't want to help them (Bernie).

Bernie's comments indicate that he was forced to cope with racism continually at his rehabilitation centre. He says that he witnessed other Black ex-prisoners leaving the facility and returning to prison because they could not handle the level of racism. His comments highlight that as a Black ex-prisoner, experiences of racism seem inevitable, even within a therapeutic environment. Moreover, racism adds another barrier for a Black ex-prisoner with substance abuse issues. Notably, a rehabilitation centre is supposed to be an institution that heals but the conditions under which Bernie was expected to complete treatment were not very conducive to recovery.

(2) The 'other' returns

My respondents re-entered their communities with the knowledge that negative images of them have been internalized by society. The construction of the 'other' resurfaces: "As a collective, I think there's a lot of issues (...) we're a threat, we're not liked, we're ostracized as a collectivity" (Jerry). Jerry is referring to the way that society responds to Black men. Critical race adherents note that the collective identity of the subordinate group is defined by the dominant group and that subordinate group members have very little say in this definition.

It is imposed upon them marking them as different and inferior- as the 'other' (Delgado: 1995). There is no escape because the behaviour and actions of the dominant group are constant reminders. The construction of otherness sometimes causes marginalized groups to see themselves through the eyes of others. This can have an affect on an individual's self-concept as he or she begins to feel different. Bernie says:

Yeah, and as..as soon as you..you get there as a Black person you really have to (..) not too many options. You have to either act as the stereotypical Black guy and listen to a stereotypical music and hang out with your homeys and all that shit.

Although Bernie is cognizant that these stereotypical images of Black males do not reflect reality, his comments suggest that he has internalized some of these constructions. His response resonates with Young's (1990:147) concept of the 'abject other':

Members of subordinated groups tend to perceive the world through the lens of the dominant group so they may see themselves as inferior, irresponsible and so on. The result is that they see themselves as the abject other and they will often exhibit symptoms of devaluation towards members of their own racial groups.

Bernie's comments reflect this idea when he says:

I mean on a negative level, the Black people that I was socializing with were bringing me down (..) I mean I didn't have to (..) I no longer attracted my Black friends (...) something I would face all the time (..) they didn't want to hang out with me and I knew I had to break free from that type of people. I knew I had to hang out with White people (Bernie).

After completing his stay in a rehabilitation facility, he did not want to associate with his Black peers. Instead, he made an effort to surround himself with White people because he believed that they would have a more positive influence on him. He may not have realized consciously that he was associating being Black with bad behaviour and being White with good behaviour. However, his actions and comments suggest that during his reintegration, he began to see himself as the 'abject other.'

In addition, Bernie's comments suggest that as a Black ex-prisoner he has 'othered' himself to the point of inferiorization, which describes a situation whereby oppressed persons often understand their interests in ways that reflect the interests of the dominant group (Freire:1994). Critical race scholars note that when Blacks adopt this mentality, the result is internalized oppression. To this end, Blacks may be contributing to their own subordination by giving the views of outsiders too much weight. Indeed, the construction of the 'other' seems to affect some of the decisions that my respondents make during the re-entry process.

(3) 'Raced' ex-prisoners

The stories of my respondents speak to the specificity of being 'raced' ex-prisoners. For some of my research subjects, this is a harsh reality:

I was a Black man coming from a Black family and the neighbourhood where I'm coming from would be a Black neighbourhood (..) there wasn't a lot of resources you know so it was difficult for me being a Black man from the neighbourhood I was coming from (Virgo).

He continues by saying:

I saw myself as a beautiful Black man [mm-hm] but also as a Black man that's going to have a lot of problems (....). I still felt proud being Black and yet at the same time, disappointed in being Black because Black means no opportunity, hardships, you know, ridicule... uh even from your own brothers (Virgo).

These comments highlight that Virgo is very conscious that being a Black ex-prisoner is a unique experience, especially if an individual is returning to poverty and deprivation. His interpretations of social reality are influenced by his life experiences as a 'raced' subject.

There seems to be an added burden of responsibility in terms of succeeding as a Black ex-prisoner. Similarly, Bernie explains what it means to be a 'raced' ex-prisoner in his circumstances:

I have an advantage over a lot of my peers in jail (..) don't have and maybe one or two of my peers are not in jail (..) my Black friends (..) yeah, they're all back in, it's sad (Bernie).

His comments emphasize that many of his Black peers are still behind bars and this is a reality that has affected him tremendously as a Black ex-prisoner. As a 'raced' ex-prisoner, he seems to be particularly sensitive when it comes to other Black prisoners, especially since they are his friends. The accounts of my respondents indicate that the lens of race will affect most facets of their lives.

But being Black inside, being Black outside is gonna be challenging but then again, since you're Black from creation..like Bob would say...I mean, you don't always...it's not every day you're going to harp on.."Oh, I'm Black...da..da..da," but the challenges are always there in a White society whether you're inside, the same kind of criticism, the same kind of critics, the same kind of prejudices are there (Jerry).

His words not only serve as a reminder that social relations are 'raced' whether an individual is in or out of prison. His comments also show that as a result of being 'raced', he fears that acknowledging Blackness and its relationship to disadvantage can be counterproductive. In other words, emphasizing his Blackness too much could be harmful to him because others might think that he was using that as an excuse to explain the hardships he suffered. Similarly, Spirit says:

I think being a Black man played into my success because I am not one of those guys that are going to sit back and take discrimination for an excuse or I'm not going to sit back and take my image for an excuse (Spirit).

The comments of Jerry and Spirit speak to the power of the “dominant gaze,” which refers to the superior position occupied by Whites in society, which enables them to speak about other racialized groups with authority. As CRT stipulates, the 'dominant gaze' enables Whites to speak about other racialized groups with authority (Delgado, 1995: 89). In addition, it is so powerful that subjugated groups sometimes begin to construct themselves in accordance with it. While critical race scholars encourage Blacks to challenge the imposition of the “dominant gaze,” these comments suggest that some individuals in subordinate positions are afraid of challenging it in particular contexts. Furthermore, they fear that linking their subordination to their membership in a racial category will cause them problems.

(4) Combating Stigma

In the preceding discussion, the challenges that my respondents have faced as Black ex-prisoners has been brought to light. My interviewees disclose that stigma affected them as soon as they entered the penitentiary: "Yeah in terms of PO's and so on..and the system, definitely you are stigmatized right away" (Jerry). The stigmatization of my research subjects persists throughout their incarceration and further deprives them of their dignity in an environment where deprivation is commonplace. "They kinda kept reminding me that I was a prisoner and that I was society's you know, scum or whatever" (Virgo). Virgo is referring to prison officials who were constantly emphasizing his prisoner status. My respondents point out that society for the most part views ex-prisoners with hostility and contempt.

Indeed, being an ex-prisoner poses many battles and being Black compounds this reality. Erving Goffman explains that stigma has a detrimental affect on individuals: "By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human and on this assumption, we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances" (1963:120). These Black ex-prisoners express that they are already at a disadvantage as Black men before going to prison. Upon re-entry, they must come to grips with the stigma attached to being Black and having a serious criminal record:

I saw myself as an ex-con [hm-hm] that's going to be (..) that's going to have that title over his friggin head (....) Black guys out there who are doing a lot of things (..) right, being a certain way and uh..I'm being labeled like that too (..) you know, so whatever they do, I'm labeled for it even if I don't do it (Virgo).

I felt like I was stigmatized because I was coming out of jail (...) That was another jacket I had to deal with (..) I had to prove myself even more because I came from jail (..) I was just considered one of the (..) sheep of the herd of the Black community. So yeah, I had a lot to prove (Bernie).

I would love to talk more about it to people even though it's so much separate that you..like you come out, you have to shun that part of your life (Jerry).

When you have a mark like a prison um record..or something, instead of..it's not something you want to show up at uh Air Canada at their uh (..) front office (..) you know looking for a job. You don't want that on your resume. That's not something you want to deal with so I had to like put myself together in uh (..) you know. I uh (..) just knew that coming outside, I had to face a lot of things in society (Spirit).

These comments reflect that negative preconceptions about what it means to be a Black ex-prisoner complicate the lives of my respondents. As Bob Mullaly succinctly states:

Persons develop and internalize a picture of themselves, in large part, according to how society views them, which in turn is determined largely by ideology, stereotypes myths and ethnocentrism (2002:60).

As Goffman (1963) emphasizes, stigma causes individuals to have a 'spoiled identity.'

This in turn leads them to develop strategies to ameliorate stigma. My research subjects point out that coping with stigma upon release is particularly challenging:

Initially, the first year I was out, I was extremely paranoid and I felt labeled and I felt as a Black man and I wouldn't do (..) like I said I wouldn't do things (..) how do I say additional problems being a Black guy (Bernie).

Being a Black ex-prisoner seems to be a difficult task. My respondents say that telling others about their imprisonment is very hard and it can end up doing them more harm than good. Bernie mentions a situation where he decided to divulge the fact that he was an ex-prisoner:

The ones that felt comfortable with me as a Black guy and then you know, as soon as I started talking a little bit about my past and I had mentioned I had been..that I had been in the jail system then they would kind of just like (..) you know get back a little bit and get defensive and think I was like the stereotypical Black guy coming out of jail (Bernie).

I have highlighted the idea that race is often a basis for the differential treatment of individuals. My respondents reveal that the combination of Blackness and ex-prisoner status shapes their employment opportunities. Spirit comments on the difficulty that uneducated Black ex-prisoners face:

Between nationalities and races, there's stigmatism and that plays a major part and role in our life..the centrefold..the most important part..because you go up there as a Black man without a degree or sometimes (..) an ex-prisoner or something, they're going to turn you back (Spirit).

My respondents employ various strategies in order to manage stigma during their reintegration. Virgo, Spirit and Bernie try to do positive things in the community that will make community members see that they are responsible, law-abiding citizens:

Like well, I had to show the community that it wasn't going to happen to me again by getting a good job and keep on going the way that I'm going (..) and make something come out of my life (Spirit).

All of my respondents made a concerted effort not to associate with certain friends as a strategy for managing stigma:

And I kinda put my friends aside (..) I didn't have to..you know what, I'm gonna (..) I don't need this friend. I don't need to be a part of it. I need to change my life around (Virgo).

Spirit has never mentioned his incarceration to his children and he avoids having any contact with prisoners:

Listen to me. I'm a one man soldier (..) I don't want nothing to do with no prisoners. I don't want nothing to do with no other prisoner. For me, a prisoner is just a word like try to be a scar on you[hm-hm] so if I want to be clean, I can't hang with another guy because who you roll with is just who you are (Spirit).

Lee (2005) notes that as individuals, people from marginalized groups vary in terms of how chronically self-conscious they are about their stigmatized status. Virgo's stigma is reduced because there are other Black ex-prisoners in his community whom he can relate to so he does not feel so isolated. Bernie distances himself from the Black community after he leaves a rehabilitation facility because he is afraid that his reputation has been tarnished. Jerry is cautious about who he talks to about his imprisonment but he has discussed his prison experience on radio shows and other public forums. Spirit seems extremely self-conscious about his stigmatized status and he chooses not to talk about his incarceration with others. He is conscious that as a Black ex-prisoner, he will carry that stigma wherever he goes:

You know as a Black man (....) you know being out here, you're going to be looked at for life [right] regardless of the situation, you're always going to be looked upon for life [Right] (Spirit).

His comments speak to the reality that many Black men face because they are a group that is highly stigmatized. All of my informants admit that it is easiest to try to shun that part of their lives.

Jerry explains:

Since jail and since being incarcerated, it's so much a no no that you can't you know, you keep going on with your life when you go to work or you look for an apartment or you have a new girlfriend or whatever, you're not going to talk so much about that because obviously, the person or whatever might disregard you (Jerry).

Through racism and the construction of the other, the 'dominant gaze' depicts Black male ex-prisoners as a threat to society and this results in their stigmatization. Unless they are able to successfully apply for pardons, their prison record is a permanent marker. In addition, there is nothing they can do to hide their Blackness because it is visible to others. To be viewed and treated as second-class, expendable and the like and to have an identity imposed by another group based on stereotypes and sentiments of an inferior other is difficult to overcome. However, my respondents reveal that despite the stigma attached to being a Black ex-prisoner, they have been successful in their resettlement. In the following discussion, my research subjects explain how they used race as a resource in their reintegration.

(5) Embracing Race as a Source of Empowerment

Individuals often race themselves as a way of showing their alliance with a particular racial group. This is a way for marginalized populations like Blacks to foster a sense of group solidarity. Furthermore, it can provide individuals with a valuable source of strength. All of my respondents emphasize that valuing race was essential to their successful reintegration. Although Bernie talks about rejecting his Black friends at a certain point in his reintegration, he still admits to gaining strength from his ties with the Black community.

All of my research participants seem to benefit at some point by using race as a resource in their re-entry. Jerry comments on going to a prison support group that was specifically for Black prisoners:

I was part of the ONYX group [right] the Black group [uh-uh] in CFF. I was the secretary (..) ONYX was my greatest support (..). I did a lot with ONYX (..) acknowledging myself that I was still..my self esteem of myself that I wasn't that we were not all pourriture..garbage you know like the system (..) guys in the wing..White or Black..to each other..it's very much like..you know you're dirt and chien all that kind of (..) that's all you hear in jail, eh foul language and everything. So obviously, you go to ONYX and then you're someone again (Jerry).

The participation in a support group for Black prisoners can be one way to give Black males a sense of empowerment in an environment that deprives them of their liberty. As Jerry articulates, ONYX provided him with support and this not only helped him during his incarceration. It also assisted him upon re-entry because it equipped him with the self-confidence and self-esteem he needed to make a smooth transition into the community. In addition, his participation in ONYX led him to become involved in another organization that helps ex-prisoners to reintegrate:

From the outside, we had a group, which is now called Mouvement. We were having meetings. La Licra..it was called for many years (..) da, da, da so we'd have meetings and I was one of the only inmates (..) Black inmates that continued with them (..) definitely it's a very positive (..) the fact that we discuss how to reintegrate into society, how to facilitate certain support systems for the ones coming out and so on (Jerry).

Bernie's comments also indicate that race was a major resource during his reintegration, particularly when he was in a treatment facility:

I mean, I was a lot closer to the Black community in Portage at the beginning because they were really my only support system [right] until I got enough education and enough seniority in the house to be able to...to distinguish myself from the group and become kind of like a role model [yeah]. I don't know. I had gone through it on some minor level so I had taken the engagement myself for future Black members who came into the community that I would be there as a support system (Bernie).

He understood that he too could be a mentor for future Black ex-prisoners who would come there and be looking for support. His comments also suggest that some Black ex-prisoners deliberately seek out outlets that make them feel like they are part of a Black collective. For Jerry, since he has been out of prison, he has immersed himself in Black organizations.

I'm on the Board of Black History Month. I've been on a few boards so obviously (...) community resources. I'm with Black Theatre Workshop advisory committee this year. In terms of resources, I deal with CRAR..this organization..race relations and so on because the cases here (..) Black family support group here (Jerry).

Jerry has made the conscious decision to actively participate in Black organizations that provide him with strong cultural support and enable him to express his Black identity. He has also chosen employment that is specifically linked to the Black community. It is clear that using race as a resource has been beneficial to the reintegration of my informants. Spirit mentions a Black community centre in his neighbourhood, which helped him to adjust upon his re-entry into society.

NCC Negro Community Centre. You know and that was um (..) that was pretty much accessible to us (..) you know, we had older, caring Black folks that cared about us having some place to go.

Being involved in the NCC had a positive impact on Spirit's life. Moreover, it helped him to facilitate his successful resettlement. These Black ex-prisoners seemed to rely on resources that were connected to their racial identity. Perhaps this provided them with a sense of comfort and security. Having race as a resource was particularly important for my respondents because the correctional system was not helpful in ensuring their successful re-entry.

This leads me to discuss the shortcomings of the correctional system with respect to my respondents. In effect, my research participants give credit to external parties for helping them to reintegrate after their imprisonment.

(6) Correctional Failure and Outside Support

Due to the racism that permeated the prison system, my respondents reveal that familial and communal support were crucial factors in their successful re-entry.

The narratives of my respondents support the literature on Black prisoners, which argues that correctional institutions are unable to sufficiently prepare Black males for reintegration into their communities (Billingsly, 1978; Asser 1992; Grier, 1999). For these Black ex- prisoners, CSC did not provide them with the assistance that they needed in order to re-enter society:

It was just a monitoring game (..) you know, they round you up and send you back to prison. I mean if you screw up, what kind of resources do they have for you? They just send you back to prison (Virgo).

It was just really, really stressful and um the system itself, I don't it really... it's not really there for you and especially as a Black man..(..)Because you're just a number They want to get rid of you and if you survive and make something of yourself, then power to you (Bernie).

This is another instance in which race plays an important role in the experiences of my respondents with respect to their reintegration. Bernie's comments highlight that Black men sometimes feel alienated by an institutional system that often appears to ignore their needs. This has consequences on their ability to make a smooth transition into society. Furthermore, the comments of both Virgo and Bernie support the findings in my literature review, which argue that CSC is preoccupied with enforcing an actuarial model that focuses on recidivism rates as opposed to assisting prisoners.

All of my research participants expressed that available correctional programming did not cater to their cultural needs:

Uh...none of them was because it was generally normal programs (..) english, math, not anything to do with like my personal culture, my lifestyle or my history (Spirit).

His comments resonate with Mullaly's understanding of 'cultural imperialism':

Through a process of ethnocentrism, the dominant group most often without realizing it, projects its experiences and culture as representative of all humanity (2002:46).

Spirit's history and perspectives were rendered invisible while the dominant culture imposed its experiences upon him. Furthermore, the accounts of my respondents challenge the effectiveness of the Ethnocultural offender programs that were discussed earlier in my literature review. Indeed, my research participants insist that CSC has not provided them with any programming that is sensitive to their cultural needs. Instead, institutional and cultural racism have jeopardized the well being of these Black ex-prisoners. This type of exclusion forces my informants to search elsewhere for support. For Virgo, a church group helped him to prepare for his release:

They were instrumental in allowing you to feel human (...) because you know, but in church it's non-violent (..) like people are caring. They come from the outside (Virgo).

The visits from this religious group gave him a sense of hope and confidence, which boosted his morale upon re-entry into the community. While the church group provided him with strong social support, they were also oppressive in the sense that they did not believe him when he tried to discuss the racism he faced in prison.

Beyond that, this served to silence him by denying his reality and rendering his experiences invisible. The result is "support" which disempowers and denies at the same time as it seeks to help. Rivera (2002) addresses the need to incorporate programming in prison that is culturally sensitive to the needs of prisoners. He suggests adding African American and Latino history classes to the educational curriculum. This is one way of acknowledging that the stories of racial minorities are important. Furthermore, it is a positive step towards making the Eurocentric programming in prisons more inclusive. In the Canadian context, such a program might be embraced by Black prisoners.

For Jerry, a Black prisoner support group called ONYX helped him to successfully reintegrate into society. Bernie credits workers from a rehabilitation facility for helping to prepare him for his release:

Well, I mean, they were a large support network for me on an emotional level (...) and uh they would come and visit me once a week (..) and uh I would do follow-ups with them and do interviews on the telephone (..) and they were just kind of basically preparing me psychologically (....) very helpful emotionally (Bernie).

All of the support for my research subjects came from outside groups, which suggests that CSC support for these Black ex-prisoners was inadequate.

The stories of my respondents reflect that community support was integral to their successful re-entry. It gave them a personal and social sense of well being during a difficult time in which the scars of imprisonment were fresh.

I was a Black man. I was a Black man when I left the community (..). You know, that I lived in. The community with families that know me and my family. And I was Black. And who did I come back to? I came back to Black people, you know what I mean? So they accepted me like natural (Virgo).

Uh (..) the community, you have to be a part of it and once you're involved with it, it will be there for you. It will support you so in that part of it, me knowing the people in the community was always like you know..something that I'm satisfied with as a social part of my life (Spirit).

Communities can serve as helpful advocates for my respondents. These comments suggest that communal supports are invaluable resources for Black ex-prisoners.

In my literature review, I mentioned that the scholarship on released Black prisoners emphasizes the importance of familial support (Laurendale, 1993). The comments of my informants echo these findings. Given that these Black ex-prisoners are rejected and alienated by repressive institutional practices, family support is especially significant. Indeed, familial support has been critical to the successful reintegration of these Black ex-prisoners:

But visits [right] they brought me stuff and letters (..) a lot of support from my family (..) my parents (..) they had their doubts and they wanted to see me progress.

Strong familial support throughout his incarceration enabled Jerry to succeed upon release. Similarly, Virgo explains:

I say oh my God, and I think that's what taught me too, to make the transition from the prison out here. I had a family. I had people that loved me and showed the love.

For Virgo, the support of his family gave him hope while he was in prison. Furthermore, their ongoing care assisted him upon his release. In Spirit's case, his family has provided him with a source of strength throughout this ordeal:

I just had good family support outside. They would come and visit me you know (..) Yeah that helped. That keeps your family close (...) My supportive things was my family....that was my big supportive thing..my family.

With one exception, familial support was critical in enabling my interviewees to survive their incarceration and make a smooth transition into society. For some of them, it was their only means of support inside.

It is important to remember that although my informants have a lot in common, their experiences differ in many ways. For instance, Bernie chose not communicate with his family while he was in prison. It was only after he re-entered the community that he sought family support.

According to their narratives upon release into the community, in terms of correctional support, it was virtually non-existent. My research subjects reveal that their parole officers were not positive mentors:

You just have to go see the Parole officer once a month (..) I don't think that was a resource cause (..) you know what does he try or they try to do? Always trying to find out what are you doing. If they don't like it, they'll send you back to prison (Virgo).

I could see where the PO's were kind of bias and racist in a way.....(Jerry)

She was kind of an uptight, old French Canadian woman who I felt at the time was racist herself. So, I mean, I really didn't take her very seriously and I just thought she was part of the system (..) and I just wanted it to uh (..) get off my back (Bernie).

These comments suggest that parole officers neglected to give my interviewees the support they needed upon their re-entry into their respective communities. Instead, they had to cope with racism and intimidation from the very individuals who were supposed to be providing them with assistance. This impeded their reintegration process. The comments of my respondents speak to an ongoing need for support once Black ex-prisoners resettle in their communities.

The support of outside groups was crucial for my research subjects. It was mentioned earlier in the chapter that race was also an incredible resource for them. One other component that was critical but has not yet been addressed, is identity.

In the following discussion, my respondents recall the ways in which identity has influenced their imprisonment and reintegration.

Part Five: Identity

My research subjects reflect on their experiences of incarceration and reintegration through narratives that center around race. Their stories highlight that a Black identity is central to who they are as individuals. People are given identities through symbolic meanings (Goffman, 1963). The Black identity of my respondents is established in two ways. First, others impose the label of Black on them. Secondly, these men make an effort to announce themselves as Black in social situations. It is useful to apply Goffman's concept of 'master status' to this discussion. A 'master status' is a social position with exceptional importance for an individual's personal and social identity (Hewitt, 1989). It is a label that supersedes all other labels. For my respondents, the Black identity can be seen as their 'master status'. Although they have other identities, the reality is that society views them as Black men first and foremost. Mullaly defines identity:

It refers to conditions or distinguishing features that mark or characterize or identify an individual. Identity is the process and product of an individual's interaction with influences in the physical and social world. These influences include, among others, one's history, one's family and the dominant ideology at the particular point of history in which the individual is going through the process of identity formation (2002:57).

Keeping this definition in mind, I move on to discuss how my respondents express and manage their identity. Furthermore, I distinguish between personal and social identity. The former refers to how an individual views himself or herself.

The latter is the part of the self-concept that comes from group association, interpersonal relationships, and social position or status (Breakwell, 1986). These two types of identity often overlap and it is hard to know if an individual can easily differentiate between both aspects.

(1) Personal Identity:

Frantz Fanon (1965) argues that racial oppression causes its victims psyche so much damage that they feel compelled to ask themselves: who am I? "Everybody learns some combination, some version of the rules of racial classification, and of her own racial identity often without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation." (Omi and Winant: 1994: 60). Echoing the sentiments of critical race scholarship, which suggests that social interactions are inevitably 'raced', the importance of racial identity should not be underestimated when it comes to these ex-prisoners. Constructions of Blackness become critical in the discussion as Black ex-prisoners grapple with their personal identity.

Headley emphasizes the relevance of identity:

Identity, minimally speaking is important precisely because, among other things, it serves as a rudder by which individuals navigate the turbulence generated by their social cultural, and political environments. The significance of identity also emerges from the social imperative of being able to impose some order and coherence on one's existence (2002:45).

In my interviews, it became clear that these Black ex-prisoners recognized the centrality of personal identity in their daily lives, particularly with respect to race. All of my respondents are passionate about their Black identity:

As a Black man, I felt strong (..) I felt strong because I had went through the prison system (..) And at that time they tried to kill me.. and here I am a strong Black man still standing (Virgo).

His comments resonate with bell hooks (1994) who argues that constructing a self and identity for Blacks serves as a liberatory exercise. This means that my respondents are given the opportunity to exercise a degree of freedom by asserting their Black identity. Speaking about Blackness can be a positive experience, especially since their racial identity was frequently threatened while they were in prison. After experiencing a term of incarceration, it is important for my informants to exercise some autonomy. Asserting themselves as Black men can help them to fulfill that need.

My research subjects express that they are proud of being Black. Being Black does not ravage the psyche of these ex-prisoners. This sense of pride is accompanied by an awareness that Black male-ex prisoners are going to face several barriers once they re-enter the community. Indeed, there is a particular struggle that leads these Black ex-prisoners to reflect on their Black identity:

I saw myself as a strong Black man when I got out of prison (.....) I see myself today as a very responsible young Black man because there's so much adversity against you (Spirit).

Spirit did not allow the experience of imprisonment to damage his identity as a Black man. His comments reflect that he takes pride in his Blackness, especially since he has had many obstacles to overcome.

Similarly, Bernie says:

I didn't realize it until I had got to that point and then I kind of went, "Holy shit, I'm the only Black person left here," and it was a sense of pride that I had but also it was you know (..) a little bit frightening (Bernie).

For Bernie, knowing that he was the only Black ex-prisoner to successfully finish a treatment program made him extremely proud of his Blackness. To this end, it strengthened his racial identity and it also reminded him of how difficult it was for Black ex-prisoners to succeed in that environment.

For Jerry, wearing dreadlocks is one of the ways in which he expresses his Blackness. His strong identification with Rastafarianism and reggae proved to be problematic for him in prison. Nonetheless, he embraced it not only because he was proud of it but also because the correctional system repeatedly threatened his personal identity. The way that individuals negotiate their social environment reflects how they conceptualize their (and others) identity. Proclaiming a Black identity remains a highly empowering experience for these Black ex-prisoners as a means through which they can shape their own self-definitions. A positive self-image gives these men a sense of value to society and enables them to be self-determining. However as critical race theorists contend, the dominant ideology will significantly influence the formation of one's identity. Moreover, the way society views an individual will inevitably effect his or her self-concept. In the next discussion, the importance of a social identity is outlined.

(2) Social Identity

These Black ex-prisoners share a common status that has been assigned to them by others and they have been subjected to categorical treatment both during and after their incarceration. Their shared experiences as Black men unites them. Embracing a Black identity is an attempt to regain a feeling of self worth and belonging. One way to achieve this is by turning to others for affirmation:

I had to kind of prove myself to the brothers..[o.k.] you know, and be accepted by them because I couldn't see any other... uh peer group that I could you know (..) integrate with (..) Well, I mean, I remember the first week that I got there, I had gotten into an argument with another guy a White guy and that's when everyone just kind of looked over to me and I realized at the moment that was when I was supposed to prove myself and be accepted by the Black guys. So, I mean, I got into a huge fight and everything broke out and I was able to defend myself (..) my position in the system (Bernie).

These comments resonate with Lowe (1991:118) who argues:

Members of subordinate racial groups, when faced with racist practices such as exclusion or discrimination are frequently forced to band together in order to defend their interests (if not in some instances, their very lives).

Having other Black men as his allies gave Bernie a feeling of security and inclusion. It was also a strategic way of managing his identity in a racially hostile environment. A social identity is important to my respondents because this gives them a greater sense of purpose:

I'm unique. I'm proud. I'm doing positive things on a cultural level. I teach Black youth (..)I am aware that I am a positive role model to them. When I go to my old hood and stuff like that, a lot of my friends are still in that lifestyle. You can kind of see a glimmer in their eye..look, it's possible (Bernie).

I mean I did (..) I did things for the Black community. I helped them with a basketball tournament in the summertime (..) You know, so I've done some speaking through them. You know, so I have done for the Black community (Virgo).

These comments confirm the idea that individuals perform their identity for others.

Bernie recognizes that there are expectations associated with being a Black role model and he wants to succeed in fulfilling them. On the other hand, Virgo's comments suggest that he believes it is his responsibility to give back to the Black community. My research subjects note that their Black identity is a major component in their lives. However, they are cognizant that racialized social locations can be disadvantageous in certain contexts. Consequently, other identities are embraced as a strategy for managing their self- concepts. This leads me to examine the intersecting identities of my respondents.

(3) Intersecting Identities

It is crucial to note that although racial identity is important to many Black ex-prisoners, it is not the only component that makes up their self-concept. Individuals have multiple identities. In fact, people have intersecting identities, which means that there is more than one way that they are affected by disenfranchisement and inequalities. Identity is by no means static. We experience the world through multiple lenses that are continually shifting focus. My interviewees reinforce this notion by expressing their nuanced identities. This is especially true for Jerry whose identity is particularly layered and complex. He identifies himself as a Black man but this identity intersects with Rasta, musician, adoptee, prisoner, ex-prisoner, bi-cultural, bilingual, addict, father and student. For Jerry, these identities overlap:

I still felt marginalized as a Black person. I still felt my life experience was special in a way where..being adopted, going to jail, experiencing a lot of drugs, the street life and so on, being scholared too, going to private schools you know and so on..I still felt that my life was my own (Jerry).

In these comments, it is evident that there are multiple layers that combine to make up Jerry's identity. These multiple identities can also contribute to multiple forms of discrimination. Notice that he begins by identifying as a Black person and he continues by connecting that identity with other personal locations. Mac and Ghaill points out that "identity is always in part narrative, involving selective representations that contribute to one's sense of oneself" (1999:45). These representations are fluid and they relate to the different social relationships of individuals.

In prison, Jerry's bilingualism was very important. It enabled him to act as a mediator for Black French and English prisoners. He capitalized on this opportunity:

There was inside up to this day this rift between French and English, even among Black inmates still is very profound. You know, they use it just to make...instead of uniting all the Blacks. You've got the Haitians and the English..that was more a headache.....and ONYX was bilingual and I was bilingual...I didn't have..I could speak to the Haitians, I could speak to the English (Jerry).

Bernie also mentions that being a bilingual Black man proved to be helpful to him, especially during his time at a rehabilitation facility:

I saw how hard and how difficult it was for my Black peer group and I saw how they were shunned and I (...) I saw how people didn't want to help them out (...). Yes. But I had fortunately the tool of being bilingual so I mean I had the advantage over the majority of Black residents there (Bernie).

The comments of my respondents suggest that sometimes they engaged with different identities strategically in order to manage their self-concept effectively in various social contexts. The characteristics of identity will shift in relation to each other according to the context in which the identity is located (Mullaly, 2002). In that particular social context, Bernie identified as a bilingual, Black addict. Ian Hacking reflects on identity by saying:

Identification, the process through which an individual intentionally shapes her project- including her own life plans and conception of the good-by reference to available labels, available identities (1987: 236).

Upon re-entering the community, Virgo made a commitment to be "the best friggin uncle" to his nieces and nephews. Virgo's identity as a Black man intersected with his identity as an Uncle, both during and after his incarceration. He explains:

So I wanted to represent..and I wanted to represent..and I wanted to be a role model to my nephews [right] stuff like that. A strong Black man in society (.....) so that was big you know, that was my identity which I had (Virgo).

A shifting identity means that sometimes individuals are forced to place one identity in front of another.

For instance, Jerry states:

Well, when you're in rehab, first of all, you learn..um it is not so much you're Black or White [uh-uh} male or female (..) you're just an addict (Jerry).

While he was in a treatment centre, Jerry was expected to abandon his other identities and concentrate on his 'addict' status. On the other hand, he chooses to place his identity as a human being in front of his identity as a Black person:

I'm just not one guy that wants to stigmatize myself like that. I'm just from the human race before being from the Black race.

Again, this suggests that different identities are embraced partially as a way of managing an individual's self-concept.

My research subjects have a variety of identities that they can access. For Spirit, after his incarceration, being a self-educated man was the crux of his identity. In Bernie's case, being Black took on more significance during his adulthood. Blackness intersects with other identities that are sometimes equally important so it is inaccurate to assume that being Black always trumps all other identities. However, it is a key identity marker in the lives of these Black ex-prisoners and as I mentioned earlier, Black has ended up being the 'master status' of these men. It is impossible to subtract out any part of my interviewees' identities and ask them to pretend that they are only Black today or only ex-prisoner. Indeed, their identities are nuanced and this is what shapes their self-concepts.

Their stories are reminiscent of author Jules-Rosette who says:

Almost everyone has something passionate to say about identity. Identity discourses are ways of speaking about one's perceived and desired location in the social world. They are complex and deceptive because they appear to be statements of fact and exhortations to act, when they are, in fact expressions of virtual state (e.g., "wanting to be or "wanting not to be") assertions such as "I am a good citizen" or "I am Black and proud" are not so much reality claims as they are affirmations or voicings of a wish.

The statement "Black is beautiful" expresses a similar wish for Black to be beautiful in a social universe where this category is demeaned (1998:240).

By confidently asserting their identities, my research subjects are reflecting the critical race objective and creating powerful counterstories that challenge the 'dominant gaze.' In addition, their narratives on identity serve as a springboard for exploring the role of subjectivity in their lives.

It is critical to emphasize that there is a dialectical relationship between identity and subjectivity. The biography and history of my interviewees shapes their identity and this in turn impacts their subjectivity. Peshkin (1988) argues that subjectivity comes from the values and attitudes that individuals hold. In this context, I will be observing how the Black identity as a 'master status' affects the subjectivity of my research participants. Subjectivity has the capacity to influence what we see and do not see. Keeping this in mind, I turn to a discussion on subjectivity.

(4) Subjectivity

In my theoretical chapter, I mentioned that the subjectivities of Black ex-prisoners are the result of a range of social relations that are produced in the wake of imprisonment and reintegration. Being 'raced' necessarily influences the set of narratives that my research subjects articulate. Virgo's comments indicate that his perspectives on the criminal justice system have been shaped by his experiences as a Black man:

Yeah, the consequences of me going to prison, yeah (..) of me being a Black man (..) Because if I was a White man, I would have been treated a lot more fairly. But because I was a Black guy, I wasn't taken into account because the judge, the prosecutor, when they looked at me, they didn't see their Uncle, their cousin, their sons, their brother. Come on, they seen a Black man. There's no social liaison there (Virgo).

This statement effectively shows that Virgo's understanding of the criminal justice system reflect his experiences as a 'raced' individual who has been criminalized. Similarly, Jerry is able to express his opinion about the criminal justice system:

That's where we still have to get better representation politically..the overrepresentation of Black people in jail..Black males and so on..I always say to politicians, "You know, right now you're incarcerating all these Black youth because they're not going to the beat of what the system and so on and so on..they can't make money in a legal way and so on. But at the same time, it's like, we're running after..trying to make things better..having this program that program..doesn't seem to fit with the Black men but at the same time, the wrong has been done way before and it hasn't been repaired with my grandfather, with my great grandfather, the wrong has been done. He wasn't recognized and he was doing everything. He was walking to your beat and everything and he was still treated like a third class..well, not even citizen in many cases (Jerry).

His comments echo those of Rowbotham and Rutherford (1990) who argue that the Black identity is influenced by a multiplicity of power relations. Jerry is able to make the connections between politics, imprisonment and a history of racial oppression because he is a 'raced' individual who has seen how the criminal justice system operates firsthand.

(5) Final Comments: Assessing Successes and Future Challenges

Black feminist criminologist Marcia Rice (1990) suggests that criminology should adopt a more inclusive approach to framing race, which is an ideological construct that requires three levels of analysis: the macro (which involves the role of historical, social, economic and political processes), the middle range (which involves the discussion of cultural and racial ideologies) and the micro (which includes identification of geographical location, age and other demographic factors).

Keeping this in mind, by analyzing the personal accounts of my respondents, I am attempting to broaden traditional conceptualizations of race, specifically in the context of imprisonment and reintegration. This is accompanied by the hope that a more accurate picture of how a comprehensively racialized social structure affects my research participants will be realized. The powerful reflections of my respondents sketch the ways in which race has impacted their ability to successfully reintegrate into the community after a period of long term incarceration. As victims of racism inside and outside prison walls, these Black ex-prisoners have critically engaged in their re-entry process. As Yamato writes:

The effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and decentred complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle (1990:116).

To this end, Black ex-prisoners are active agents who have adopted strategies to combat the racist attitudes, violence, policies and procedures that they continue to be subjected to.

Critical race adherents have argued that the 'dominant gaze' has relegated Blacks to an inferior status that silences them by denying their experiential knowledge's (Delgado: 1995, Collins, 1993). Through their personal reflections, my respondents are able to carve a space for themselves as individuals who possess relevant knowledge about race and its relationship to imprisonment and reintegration. Although my research subjects share a common history of racial oppression, their narratives reveal that their needs differ:

Resources? Well, financial aid (..) say hey listen, you're being incarcerated. You have been in for so long. Here's some financial aid. Here's some place where you can go and..and work (Virgo).

What other resources? I don't know any other..just maybe friendship (..) someone to share like what's here..it's an interview but I haven't had the occasion..(Jerry)

Drawing upon my theoretical framework, I have argued that race is a central element in the lives of Black ex-prisoners. Furthermore, the exclusion of 'raced' individuals from criminological discourses must be challenged by positioning the narratives of Black ex-prisoners at the center of inquiry. This would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the fact that the complexities of race can be observed in the dominant institutional structures that are suffused with racial meanings.

CONCLUSIONS

The present is where we get lost if we forget our past and have no vision of the future (*Ayikewei Armah*, quoted in Quamina, 1996:2003:223)

Critical race scholars have emphasized the need to highlight the narratives of Blacks so that their past experiences of racial struggle can influence future legal policies (Delgado, 1995). By extension, the stories of Black ex-prisoners can serve to inform penal policy and foster change in the arena of criminal justice. Given Black ex-prisoners marginal status and the absence of their histories from criminological discourse in Canada, this academic endeavor is long overdue. Furthermore, by critically engaging with the topic of race and reintegration, I am broadening the existing scholarship on imprisonment.

In the preceding chapters, I have addressed the conditions under which these Black ex-prisoners have been expected to reintegrate into their communities. Their narratives not only indicate that race and racism are significant factors in prison for them but their personal accounts also speak to the ways in which the racism in prison mirrors the racism in society. To this end, racism tends to exacerbate already unpalatable conditions for particular segments of ex-prisoners, Black men.

My findings have revealed, however that in spite of the disadvantaged position of these Black ex-prisoners, they have adopted a myriad of strategies to facilitate their successful transition into society. This includes engaging in resistance, using race as a resource, relying on community and familial support and embracing their racial identity. These men are active agents in their resettlement and through their narratives, they are challenging the 'dominant gaze' whether consciously or unconsciously.

The centerpiece of my research aimed at teasing out the complexities of race in the lives of these Black ex-prisoners. I struggled when I heard one of my research participants devaluing his Blackness and commenting that surrounding himself with White people was a means to ensuring success. This led me to recognize that internalized oppression is difficult to combat. In chapter four, I addressed how my interviewees framed issues of identity. This discussion highlighted that Black ex-prisoners have a range of identities that they access to form their self-concept. From this, I concluded that the fluidity of identity should not be underestimated.

The experiential knowledge of Black ex-prisoners should inform correctional agents whose preoccupation with risk management and recidivism ignores the lived realities of imprisonment. Similarly, the narratives of my respondents enrich academic discourses that have traditionally focused on short-term re-entry, neglecting to address the impact of long term incarceration on individuals.

My theoretical and methodological frameworks enable me to draw two broad conclusions from my research data. First, in its exclusion of Black ex-prisoners from institutional discourses about race, CSC is contributing to the continued oppression of a racial group that is overrepresented in prison yet underrepresented in the administration of criminal justice. Secondly, by failing to follow up on the two reports conducted by the commission on systemic racism in Ontario more than a decade ago, the criminal justice system is downplaying the important role of race in structuring social relations in the prison environment. By doing 'Critical Race Criminology', I have attempted to connect my theoretical framework to my empirical findings.

Different theoretical discussions may contribute their own distinctive accounts of the processes, which involve the attribution of specific meanings to racial situations. In this thesis, I have highlighted critical race theory in order to show that racialized assertions must be located within societal structures, which shape social interaction.

I remain confident that through their narratives, these Black ex-prisoners have managed to carve out a space where they can emerge as experts and advocates. Essentially, they have filtered and mediated their social worlds largely but not exclusively through a racial lens. As stigmatized and marginalized men, their experience is highly relevant to understanding the racial struggle of other prisoners who share that status. This in turn may encourage more Black ex-prisoners to document their stories.

This research has not only given voice to a group whose experiences have often been rendered invisible or illegitimate. It has also provided me with an opportunity to be heard in a discipline where Black female criminologists are an anomaly. Indeed, this research has reminded me that race is integral to my own understanding of criminal justice. To this end, a number of questions for future research emerge: Can 'Critical Race Criminology' be applied to Black female ex-prisoners in the same way? Will criminological discussions in Canada begin to view race as a significant factor that warrants more attention? Is race crucial to all Black ex-prisoners? Are White ex-prisoners aware of the role that race plays in the criminal justice system? Finally, how, in light of the constraints identified, can a more inclusionary approach be developed which takes into account the experiences of Black ex-prisoners when formulating penal policies and programs? These questions aside, it remains that reflections of Black male ex-prisoners add a new dimension to criminological inquiry.

The politics of race and racism has undergone numerous transformations in recent decades. Debates about the ontological status of race as the object of investigation and the agenda for research in this field are partly the result of these transformations. As criminal justice debates around race continue to evolve, it is crucial that the personal accounts of racialized subjects like Black ex-prisoners be placed at the center of inquiry. Hopefully, this research will encourage more academics to explore this controversial subject.

A cell is not a refuge or a place of condemnation. Our cries fall, fall against its solitary, soundless freedom. When it comes to sensing emptiness listen for the mute voice of a prisoner (Rives, 1992: 59).

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APPENDIX A



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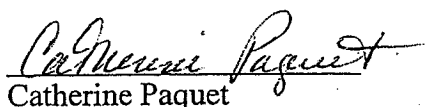
Research Grants and Ethics Services

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This is to certify that the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has examined and approved the application for extension of ethics approval for the research project **Release and Reintegration After Prison: Negotiating Gender, Culture, and Identity (File 01-02-01)** submitted by Chris Bruckert and Sylvie Frigon of the Department of Criminology. This project received initial ethics approval in April 2002 by the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities REB as meeting appropriate ethical standards set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and in the Procedures of the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Boards, and an extension of approval was provided in April 2003.

This ethics renewal certification is valid for one year from the date indicated below.


Catherine Paquet

Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For the Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB
Richard Clément

April 24, 2004
Date

APPENDIX B



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INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project: Negotiating Release and Reintegration Group One: Released Prisoners

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Criminologie

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Criminology

This research, conducted by Anne Harewood, Sylvie Frigon, Melissa Munn and Chris Bruckert looks at the process and experience of release from prison. There are number of autobiographies as well as considerable academic research on the experience of incarceration but little that explores the process of release and the long term effects of having been imprisoned. Much of the criminological and psychological analysis examines programs or processes to determine if they are correlated to successful reintegration without considering what prisoners themselves have to say. This project seeks to address this limitation by 1) sketching the the carceral, social and personal circumstances of ex-prisoners before, after and during release from prison, 2) exploring how prisoners experience the transition from prison to the community and 3) identifying what social and personal resources are useful in helping individuals to move from the institution to the community successfully.

This portion of the project is intended to gather an understanding of the experience of ex-prisoners. The research will involve an in-depth semi-structured interview. Questions will focus on the experience of incarceration; the process of release; institutional, social, cultural and personal resources; subjectivity and questions of identity.

Should you agree to participate the interview will last between two and four hours. You will be asked if you are comfortable having the interview recorded on an audio tape. If you agree the interview will be recorded and the interview tapes will be transcribed by the undersigned researcher or the assigned research assistant as soon as possible. Upon request the full transcript will be forwarded to you. If you agree to participate but do not wish for the interview to be recorded on an audio tape, detailed notes will be taken throughout the interview. In this case the processed notes will be made available as soon as possible. In either case you reserve the right to edit or delete any information which you consider to, in any way, endanger yourself or any friends, family or associates. You are entitled to a follow-up interview should you feel that clarification or additional information is required.

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In order to facilitate review and verification of the data, the tapes and/or original notes will be retained for two years after the project has been completed. At that point they will be destroyed. Transcripts will be retained for three additional years. Until such time they will be in the sole possession of the undersigned researchers or (during the research process only) the assigned research assistants.

Confidentiality will be respected, all identifying names, places and events will be changed in the transcripts and in any subsequent documents.

To ensure that participants are positioned to give free and informed consent these forms will be reviewed orally, participants will be afforded the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification regarding research goals, methods, researcher's obligations and the rights of the participants as well as any other concerns they may have before the interview begins.

The undersigned researchers have no formal association with Correctional Service of Canada, Lifeline, The National Parole Board or any other public or private sector correctional agency. Therefore, no correctional or other benefit can be anticipated as a result of participating in the research. Participants will not be paid for their participation in the research however they will be offered an honorarium of fifty dollars to cover any expenses incurred. This honorarium will be given before the interview starts. Should you wish to withdraw from the project at any time you are not required to pay back the honorarium.

Two of the undersigned researchers are currently employed as professors in the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa, Anne Harwood is a Masters student at the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa. Melissa Munn is a Doctoral student at the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa. The interview material will be used as the basis of the ethnographic study noted above. This research will be analysed for her Masters thesis at the Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa, and by the researchers for academic presentations as well as in the writing of journal articles, a book and/or book chapters.

The research is supported through University of Ottawa Funding and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council

(SSHRC).

Inquires about the research process, findings or publications should be addressed to:

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Chris Bruckert

Melissa Munn or

Sylvie Frigon

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550 Cumberland
University of Ottawa
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Phone: 613-562-5387

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The goals of the research have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I retain the right to refuse any questions or withdraw from the project at any time.

I understand that should I choose to withdraw from the research project, there will be no negative consequences for my friends, family, associates or myself as a result. Should I choose to withdraw from the research I understand that I am under no obligation to return the honorarium.

I agree to participate in the interview on the understanding that the above-detailed criteria regarding anonymity, confidentiality and use of interview material will be abided by.

I agree to have the interview tape recorded: Yes ____

No ____

Date: _____

Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

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APPENDIX A



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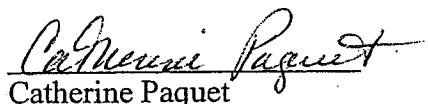
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I agree to have the interview tape recorded: Yes ____

No ____

Date: _____

Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

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APPENDIX C

PREAMBLE: *What we are researching is the process of release and reintegration of men who've experienced long periods of incarceration and have successfully reintegrated and remained in the community for many years. We are interested in how you did, and continue to, experience release. We will be focussing on things like shifts of identity, importance of gender, race, resistance and place, impact on and of your support system, challenges faced and strategies you used. We want to know about your process of reintegration. I am going to ask you a series of questions starting with your preparation for release and moving through the initial and subsequent periods up until today. At the end of the interview, I will be asking you a few questions about incarceration and about personal demographics.*

PREPARATION FOR AND PROCESS OF RELEASE (approx. 10 -15 minutes)

I'd like to start out by asking you to reflect back to when you were still in the institution and you started to prepare for release.

1. **Where were you when you started to think about preparing for your release?**
2. **How far into your sentence were you at that point?**
3. **Were you working in the institution at the time? At what?**
4. **Can you describe the**
 - ☐What was happening?
 - ☐What institution?
 - ☐When was it and where were you?
 - ☐How did you prepare for release?
 - ☐What was helpful/not helpful?
5. **Can you describe how you experienced this preparation process?**
 - ☐Identity?
 - ☐Gender?
 - ☐Emotions?
 - ☐physically?
6. **Do you think your experience of this preparation for release was conditioned by your being a**
 - 6.1) man?
 - 6.2) a particular race/culture
7. **What challenges did you face during this process?**
8. **How did the institution help you prepare for release?**
 - 8.1) What was helpful/not helpful ?
9. **Were any community or religious groups involved in helping you prepare for release?**
 - ☐ if yes, explain and give an
 - 9.1) Where they helpful/not helpful
10. **Were there any people involved in helping you prepare for release?**
11. **Is there anything else about the process of preparing for release that you'd like to add before we move on to talk about your release from prison?**

IMMEDIATE PERIOD AFTER RELEASE (approx. 25 - 30 minutes)

Now I'd like to talk with you about the period of time immediately after your release from prison.

1 Describe the day of your release from prison?

- ☐What was the weather like?
- ☐Did someone meet you? Who?
- ☐What were the first few things you did?

2 Where did you first live after prison? Can you describe it? How long did you live there?

The next questions will refer to this period of time.

3 What happened in your life during this period?

- ☐Socially?
- ☐Employment?
- ☐Intimate relationships?
- ☐Friendships?

4 How did you see yourself during this period?

- ☐how was this linked to social/family roles?
- ☐how was this linked to being a man?
- ☐how was this linked to your social class?, job?
- ☐how was this linked to your being black/white/aboriginal/?

5 Can you tell me about your experience of re-entry into the community?

- ☐Were some of these experiences linked to you being a man?
- ☐Were some of these experiences linked to you being (white/black/aboriginal)?

5.1 How did you experience the shift in spaces?

6 What were some of the challenges for you during this period and how did you deal with these?

- ☐Were some of these challenges and your coping strategies linked to you being a man?

6.1 Were there different challenges at the beginning of this time compared to the end?

- ☐Were some of these challenges and your coping strategies linked to you being black, white, aboriginal, ?

6.2 Was one of the challenges you faced the response of the community or segments of the community? Explain or give an example.

7 Do you ever feel stigmatized? Explain or give an example

7.1 How do you cope with those feelings and situations?

7.2 Was stigmatization ever linked to being a (black,

8 What resources were available to you during this time? Did you access them?

- ☐Correctional resources
- ☐Cultural resources
- ☐family
- ☐religious

- 8.1 What services did they provide and were these helpful? Can you explain or give an example?
- 8.2 Were any unhelpful? In what way?
- 9 When did you feel that you were ready to leave
 _____.
- 9.1 Were you able to leave at that point? Explain or give an example.
- 10 Can you take a moment and think about resistance. Looking back at this period of time, do you think that you were engaging in resistance against the expectations of the correctional system, of society, of family or anything else? Explain or give an example.
- 11 Is there anything else about the period while you were living at _____ that you'd like to add before we move on to talk about the next phase of your reintegration?

PERIOD OF RESETTLEMENT (approx. 45-55 minutes)

Obviously over the long term, you've been successful in resettling after prison. We'd like to spend some time now talking about this longer period and how you've coped with the challenges and how you have experienced reintegration. I'd like to move on to talk to you in detail about the period after you left _____ until today.

10 When you left _____, where did you go?

1.1 Can you describe the area where you went?

11 What was going on in your life at that time?

12 Can you tell me about the major changes in your life after you moved to _____ until now?

- ☐ Changes in work
- ☐ Changes in living space
- ☐ Changes in physical/body
- ☐ Changes in social relations
- ☐ Changes in intimate relations
- ☐ Changes in class location
- ☐ Changes in parole status

12.1 Were any of these changes linked to you being a man?

12.2 Were any of these changes linked to you being (white/black/aboriginal/_____)?

13 Did any of these changes significantly alter or shape your experience of reintegration? How?

14 Did any of these changes affect your identity in a significant way? Explain or give an example.

14.1 Do you think your geographic location influenced your identity?

15 What were some of the challenges for you during this period and how did you deal with these?

- ☐ Were some of these challenges and your coping strategies linked to you being a man?
- ☐ Were some of these challenges and your coping strategies linked to you being black, white, aboriginal, ?

15.1 Were there different challenges at the beginning of this time compared to the end?

6.2 Was one of the challenges you faced the response of the community or segments of the community? Explain or give an example.

16 Do you ever feel stigmatized? Explain or give an example?

7.1 How do you cope with those feelings and situations?

7.2 Was stigmatization ever linked to being a (black, white, aboriginal, _____) man?

17 What factors have enabled to you to successfully remain the community?

17.1 How has your geographic location played into your success?

17.2 How has your being a (black, white, aboriginal, _____) man played into your success?

18 What resources are available to you? Did you access them?

- ☐ Correctional resources
- ☐ cultural resources
- ☐ family
- ☐ religious

18.1 What services did they provide and were these helpful? Can you explain and give an example?

18.2 Were any unhelpful? In what way?

18.3 What resources would have been helpful?

19 How do you see yourself today?

- ☐ how is this linked to social/family roles?
- ☐ how is this linked to being a man?
- ☐ how is this linked to your social class, job?
- ☐ how is this linked to your being black/white/aboriginal/?
- ☐ physically?
- ☐ how is this linked to where you live?

20 Are there any ongoing consequences of your incarceration? Explain and give an example.

- ☐ Emotional?
- ☐ Social?
- ☐ Interpersonal?
- ☐ Work?
- ☐ Sleep Patterns?
- ☐ Choice of housing?

20.1 Are they associated with being a man?

20.2 Are they associated with being white, black, Aboriginal, ___?

20.3 How do you cope with these problems?

20.4 What resources are or would be useful to help you cope?

12 Again, can you take a moment and think about resistance. Looking back at this period of time, do you think that you were engaging in resistance against the expectations of the correctional system, of society, of family or anything else? Explain or give an example.

13 In principle, would having contact with other ex-prisoners have an impact on your reintegration process. Explain or give an example.

14 Before moving on to talk briefly about your experience of incarceration, is there anything else that you'd like to add about your experience of reintegration?

INCARCERATION (Approx. 10 minutes)

I'd now like to ask you a few questions about your experience of incarceration.

- 21 For how long were you incarcerated and in which facilities?**
- ☐ When did you go in?
☐ When did you come out?
- 22 How do you think your experience of incarceration effected your experience of reintegration?**
- ☐ how you saw yourself in terms of identity and physically
☐ social (family/friends/other) resources
☐ correctional resources
☐ choice of living space
☐ sense of self as a man
- 23 What programs or groups were you involved with during your incarceration?**
- 3.1 Do you feel any of these helped you to reintegrate successfully? How?**
- 3.2 Were any of these groups or programs culturally sensitive in a manner that was relevant to you?**
- 24 Which skills, competencies, personal or social resources did you acquire while you were incarcerated?**
- 4.1 Were any of these helpful during reintegration?**
- 5. Are you doing a Life sentence and if so, what are the implications of this?**
- ☐ Identity?
☐ Resources?
☐ Resistance?
- 6. Before we go on to discuss personal demographics, is there anything about how prison conditioned your release that you'd like to add?**

PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS (approx. 15 minutes)

I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your background to get some basic demographic information.

1 Where and when were you born?

1.1 If born outside Canada, when did you immigrate?

2 Can you briefly describe your childhood and adolescence?

- ☐Where did you live?
- ☐Type of community/communities?

3 Can you briefly describe the period between adolescence and when you were incarcerated?

- ☐Where did you live?
- ☐Type of community/communities?
- ☐employment
- ☐social roles/activities

3.1 Did you return to any of these geographic areas to live after incarceration? Why or why not?

4 How would you

- ☐Class
- ☐ethnicity
- ☐composition

5 What was your relationship to your family during your incarceration?

5.1 What is your relationship to your family now?

6 Can you give me a bit of background on your past relationships.

- ☐significant romantic attachments?
- ☐significant friends?

6.1 What was the status of these relationships during incarceration?

6.2 What is the status of these now?

7 Do you have any children?

7.1 (If appropriate) Describe your relationships with your children.

7.2 How did they cope during your incarceration?

Now we just have a couple of wrap up questions and then we are done.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS (approx. 5 minutes)

- ☐ Why did you choose to participate in this research?
- ☐ Were there any important areas that we not addressed?
- ☐ What pseudonym would you like us to use?
- ☐ Would you like a copy of the transcript?
- ☐ If yes, could you please write down the email or regular mailing address where we can send this onto the consent form
- ☐ Can we contact you if we need clarification on anything?
- ☐ Can you refer us to other ex-prisoners who might be interested in participating?
- ☐ Are there support people in your life who we could contact to interview about their experience of your release and reintegration?

Thank you very much for participating in this research and for your insights.