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Brooke C. Greene

*The Graduate Center, City University of New York*

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A PRELIMINARY PROGRAM EVALUATION OF  
A NARRATIVE THERAPY INTERVENTION FOR  
PERSONS INCARCERATED FOR VIOLENT CRIME

By

Brooke C. Greene

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2018

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A PRELIMINARY PROGRAM EVALUATION OF A NARRATIVE THERAPY INTERVENTION  
FOR PERSONS INCARCERATED FOR VIOLENT CRIME

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Brooke C. Greene

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the  
Graduate Faculty in Psychology to satisfy the dissertation  
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## ABSTRACT

### A Preliminary Program Evaluation of a Narrative Therapy Intervention for Persons Incarcerated for Violent Crime

By Brooke C. Greene

Chair: Deidre Anglin, Ph.D.

The Longtermers Project is a fifteen-session group therapy intervention that has been run in three prisons in New York state, two men's facilities and one women's, since 2010. The Coming to Terms curriculum, designed specifically for work with this population by Kathy Boudin and her partners at the Osborne Association, a non-profit organization that provides assistance to formerly and currently incarcerated persons in New York state, asks participants to think, write, and speak about their lives in general and particularly about the incident crime for which they were incarcerated. Now that the program has run for several years and a significant number of participants have completed the program and subsequently secured release from prison, the time is opportune to compare program participants to otherwise similar participants who did not complete such a program. This is a hard test of the program – more than a year after participation, do participants look different from otherwise similar non-participants on major outcomes of interest: resilient coping, generativity, self-efficacy, compassion for self, compassion for other, and life narrative themes?

The present study investigated these questions by matching eight Coming to Terms participants who had since been released from prison with twelve formerly-incarcerated persons who did not complete the program but who did receive post-incarceration services from the Osborne Association or a parallel organization. Participants were matched on the variables of total time incarcerated and length of time elapsed since release from prison. While groups were not explicitly matched on other criteria, control and intervention groups evidenced similar

patterns of age, racial and ethnic representation, and severity of crime. Participants completed six instruments shown to have good psychometric properties: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003), the Self Compassion scale (Neff, 2003; Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011), the Compassion for Others scale (Pommier, 2011), the Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams & de st. Aubin, 1992), the New General Self Efficacy Scale (Chen, Gully, and Eden, 2001), and the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Isko, 2011) in addition to a demographic questionnaire developed by the researcher. Subjects likewise completed a structured, qualitative narrative protocol (see McAdams, 2006; McAdams & Guo, 2015; Ehlman & Ligon, 2012) that was assessed for the salience of certain themes, such as generativity and redemption, found in previous research to correlate with indicators of more adaptive coping. Narratives were also assessed qualitatively via a purposeful selection technique that compared the most adaptive - that is the most resilient, generative, and self-efficacious - cases in the sample to the least adaptive.

The study found that Program Participants demonstrated greater levels of generativity than did controls. Additionally, while compassion for self and compassion for other were significantly and strongly correlated constructs for intervention subjects, they were unrelated for control participants. These results provided preliminary support for the efficacy of the intervention. There were no statistically significant differences between Program Participants and controls on the dimensions of compassion for self, compassion for others, resilience, and self-efficacy, though p-values were relatively low (ranging from .15 to .26) for all variables except for compassion for self, suggesting that these variables may have assumed statistical significance given a larger sample size. There were also no statistically significant differences across treatment condition in the prevalence of six identified narrative themes. Though quantitative

analysis did not find statistical differences in the prevalence of narrative themes by treatment condition, qualitative analysis found distinct patterns of redemptive and contamination themes when more adaptive – that is more resilient, generative, and self-efficacious - cases were compared to less adaptive cases. Additionally, when all twenty narratives were coded for salience of in-prison educational programming, the vast majority of subjects were found to have spontaneously identified education as an important and positive aspect of their life trajectories; a slightly higher proportion of intervention subjects than control subjects identified education in this way.

Key Words: Mass Incarceration; Rehabilitation; Narrative Therapy; Resilience; Compassion for Self and Others

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## **Introduction**

With the United States ranking first in the world in the proportion of its citizens incarcerated (Walmsley, 2011) and with the average length of prison stays increasing 34% between 1990 and 2009 (Pew Center on the States, 2009), the trajectories of incarcerated persons assume immense practical importance. The approximately 50% of incarcerated persons convicted of violent crimes (Bureau of Justice, 2009) are of particular interest given the high human stakes of violence. Indeed, the question of whether and how persons convicted of violent crime might be “rehabilitated” – rendered able to return to civilian society as productive and law-abiding citizens – is contentious within the forensic psychology literature (Polaschek, 2010; Cooke & Michie, 2010) and is also a hotly debated political issue. Here is a policy question – whether and how persons who’ve perpetrated violence might be reintegrated into society – that leads ultimately to questions about human psychology. Under what conditions can one grow from the experience of involvement as a perpetrator of violence into a person who can integrate this experience and form alternative behaviors? What types of prison programs facilitate such personal growth and transformation, and what types of incarceration experiences inhibit a growth trajectory? Further, given the ample evidence that 1) those who perpetrate violence are also very often the victims of violence or some form of trauma (Sindicich et al, 2014) and 2) that racial and ethnic minorities, particularly black and Hispanic Americans, are grossly overrepresented among incarcerated persons in the United States (Prison Policy Initiative, 2012), there are particularly compelling social justice rationales for investigating trajectories of growth after incarceration.

The Longtermers Project is a fifteen-session group therapy intervention that has been run in three prisons in New York state, two men’s facilities and one women’s, since 2010. The

Coming to Terms curriculum, designed specifically for work with this population by Kathy Boudin and her partners at the Osborne Association, a non-profit organization that provides assistance to formerly and currently incarcerated persons in New York state, asks participants to think, write, and speak about their lives in general and particularly about the incident crime for which they were incarcerated. One original rationale for the project was that, while parole boards appear to value prisoners' ability to think reflectively about their role in the act of violence for which they were incarcerated, there is often little opportunity within the unforgiving context of prison for such a vulnerable activity as reflection on one's potential wrong-doing. Yet, the project did not wish only to improve participants' chances at receiving parole; it wished to provide the opportunity for participants to think about themselves in a nuanced way that might increase empathy for both self and other and foster greater resilience amidst life's challenges. Now that the program has run for several years and a significant number of participants have completed the program and subsequently secured release from prison, the time is opportune to compare program participants to otherwise similar participants who did not complete such a program. This is a hard test of the program – more than a year after participation, do participants look different from otherwise similar non-participants on major outcomes of interest: resilient coping, generativity, self-efficacy, compassion for self, compassion for other, and life narrative themes?

The present study investigated these questions by matching eight Coming to Terms participants who had since been released from prison with twelve formerly-incarcerated persons who did not complete the program but who did receive post-incarceration services from the Osborne Association or a parallel organization. The requirement that the control participants also receive NGO support was instituted in order to ensure that any differences found across

groups were the result of the specific Coming to Terms curriculum and not simply the result of the attention and resources signified by involvement with the Osborne Association or comparable NGO. Participants were matched on the variables of total time incarcerated and length of time elapsed since release from prison. While groups were not explicitly matched on other criteria, control and intervention groups evidenced similar patterns of age, racial and ethnic representation, and severity of crime. Participants completed six instruments shown to have good psychometric properties: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003), the Self Compassion scale (Neff, 2003; Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011), the Compassion for Others scale (Pommier, 2011), the Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams & de st. Aubin, 1992), the New General Self Efficacy Scale (Chen, Gully, and Eden, 2001), and the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Isko, 2011) in addition to a demographic questionnaire developed by the researcher. Subjects likewise completed a structured, qualitative narrative protocol (see McAdams, 2006; McAdams & Guo, 2015; Ehlman & Ligon, 2012) that was assessed for the salience of certain themes, such as generativity and redemption, found in previous research to correlate with indicators of more adaptive coping.

Additionally, a subset of these narrative interview protocols was selected for more detailed qualitative analysis to probe the development of the narrative themes as well as the subject's articulation of his/her self-identity in context. A purposeful selection strategy was utilized, with cases selected for their extreme values on the quantitative outcome measures. In this way, two cases that scored as particularly adaptive on the outcome measures of resilience, generativity, and self-efficacy relative to the sample were considered in depth alongside two cases that scored at the low end of the sample on these dimensions. This method permitted exploration of narrative themes and structure in relatively more adaptive and less adaptive formerly

incarcerated persons. Finally, the centrality of educational programming in prisons was identified inductively as a variable of likely significance and evaluated more systematically via coding of all twenty transcripts.

Formerly incarcerated persons who completed the Coming to Terms project were expected to have more salient themes of generativity and redemption in their life narratives and to demonstrate higher score indices of resilient coping, compassion for self, and compassion for others when compared to the narratives and scores of non-participants. Coming to Terms participants were also expected to demonstrate greater levels of generativity and self-efficacy than were controls and to evidence a more guilt and repair-oriented approach to moral wrongdoing (in contrast to a shame and withdrawal-oriented approach) when compared to the approach adopted by controls.

The study found that Program Participants indeed demonstrated greater levels of generativity than did controls. Additionally, while compassion for self and compassion for other were significantly and strongly correlated constructs for intervention subjects, they were unrelated for control participants. These results provided preliminary support for the efficacy of the intervention. There were no statistically significant differences between Program Participants and controls on the dimensions of compassion for self, compassion for others, resilience, and self-efficacy, though p-values were relatively low (ranging from .15 to .26) for all variables except for compassion for self, suggesting that these variables may have assumed statistical significance given a larger sample size. There were also no statistically significant differences across treatment condition in the prevalence of six identified narrative themes.

Though quantitative analysis did not find statistical differences in the prevalence of narrative themes by treatment condition, qualitative analysis found distinct patterns of

redemptive and contamination themes when more adaptive – that is more resilient, generative, and self-efficacious - cases were compared to less adaptive cases. Redemptive sequences refer to the transformation of something overtly negative – such as death, loss, or defeat – into something positive – growth, ultimate victory, recovery. Contamination sequences are effectively the opposite: the spoiling or undoing of something good. More adaptive cases displayed more redemption sequences relative to contamination sequences than did control cases. Additionally, more adaptive cases were more likely to display redemptive and contamination sequences for distinct blocks of texts, whereas less adaptive cases frequently demonstrated redemptive and contamination sequences for the same blocks of text. In effect, less adaptive cases were more likely to have contamination logics spoil positive narratives than were the more adaptive cases, who were more likely to “wrap up” blocks of texts with redemptive logic. Note that in this analysis the adaptive cases were both intervention cases and the less adaptive cases controls, though the methodology of this section does not permit deriving of inferences about intervention efficacy. Additionally, when all twenty narratives were coded for salience of in-prison educational programming, the vast majority of subjects were found to have spontaneously identified education as an important and positive aspect of their life trajectories; a slightly higher proportion of intervention subjects than control subjects identified education in this manner.

## Chapter 1

### **Literature Review: Mass Incarceration, Violent Crime, and Change across the Lifespan**

This chapter finds justification for the empirical evaluation of the program in particular features of the American criminal justice system that necessitate reevaluation of the assumptions about the sources of criminality and the human potential for change that undergird the current system of mass incarceration. After examining such features, the chapter turns to a consideration of the lessons the psychological literature offers about the human potential for change across the life course in general as well as in the particular case of persons incarcerated for violent crime. This section seeks to show that, in contrast to ubiquitous popular culture narratives that depict commission of a serious crime as indicative of an immutable defect in the individual, our current psychological knowledge base provides good reason to expect at least a significant proportion of persons experiencing long-term incarceration to undergo notable change in the direction of greater maturity, conscientiousness, and pro-social orientation during their time behind bars. Indeed, it is likely that a significant minority of such persons will undergo dramatic transformation in these years, gaining education, undertaking positions of leadership, and attempting to work in the service of positive social change. Given this potential, the chapter proceeds to discuss prison programs that can stifle or encourage such growth and presents the underlying logic of the Longtermers' Project in this light. The chapter concludes by outlining several hypotheses about ways that participants of the Longtermers Project were expected to differ from non-participants who are otherwise similar on key dimensions like age, nature of incident crime, and length of time served.

An attentive reader will notice two distinct but related questions at stake here. The first relates to the rationale for policies that maintain a large number of aging prisoners who have

been serving lengthy sentences for violent crime. This chapter implicitly calls into question such policies. The second question centers on the factors that facilitate a healthy adjustment to life outside prison for those prisoners who *are* paroled. The questions are related in that, at least ostensibly, expectations about post-parole outcomes influence parole decisions. Yet, it is in regard to the second question that this dissertation is best placed to contribute knowledge, by collecting additional data about prisoner reentry into civilian life in general and about the effects of one particular program on reentry.

### **The Crisis of Incarceration in America**

In recent years, increasing evidence has amassed that incarceration in the United States differs in notable ways from patterns of incarceration in other states. The U.S. stands out for the proportion of its citizens incarcerated, the duration of those sentences, and the disproportionate nature in which racial and ethnic minorities are represented in penal institutions. According to studies conducted by the International Centre for Prison Studies (Walmsley, 2011) and the National Research Council (Travis & Westerns, eds., 2014), the United States ranks first in the world in incarceration rate, with 707 persons incarcerated per 100,000 in 2012; the country with the next highest rate, Russia, imprisoned substantially fewer persons at 474 persons incarcerated per 100,000 (Badger, 2014; Travis & Westerns, 2014). Indeed, the current scale of incarceration is even notable when compared to previous eras of American history; while federal and state prisons held about 200,000 people in 1973, by 2009 this figure had increased to 1.5 million (Badger, 2014; Travis & Westerns, 2014). To put this rate of growth in perspective, this is an increase in the prison population of over seven times, while across the same time period the total U.S. population only increased 1.45 times (U.S. Census Bureau). Given the large numbers of persons incarcerated in the United States in both relative and absolute terms, studying the

trajectories of those (many) persons and families whose lives are shaped by incarceration assumes immense social and political importance.

### **The Racial Dynamics of Incarceration**

An additional rationale for study of post-incarceration trajectories lies in the nature of the communities bearing the greatest brunt of the incarceration burden. As has been well-documented, black and Hispanic Americans are significantly over-represented in prisons compared to their white counterparts, with this effect particularly stark among males. According to statistics collected by the Prison Policy Initiative for the year 2010, while 678 white males were incarcerated per 100,000 that year, 4,347 black males were incarcerated per 100,000. Latino males fell in between at 1,775 incarcerated per 100,000 (Wagner, 2012). The effect of race on likelihood of imprisonment is so stark that it has led Michelle Alexander (2012) to argue that incarceration serves a parallel function to the notorious Jim Crow segregation laws in maintaining what she calls a “racial caste” system. This “new Jim Crow” system, she argues, “marginalizes large segments of the African American community, segregates them physically (in prisons, jails, and ghettos), and then authorizes discrimination against them in voting, employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service” (p. 17). Alexander and others convinced of the racially discriminatory nature of the American criminal justice system argue that racial variation in incarceration rates cannot be explained, as is often attempted, by reference to higher rates of crime committed by non-whites, as blacks are disproportionately incarcerated despite similar rates of crime commission in white communities (Alexander, Ch. 3)<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, it seems that high rates of incarceration play a key role in limiting upward mobility in minority communities, with incarceration constituting direct and indirect barriers to job

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, Alexander is not without her critics. See Forman (2012), Thomas (2012), and Osel (2012).

acquisition, education completion, and positive family dynamics that make inter-generational progress more likely (Hagan & Foster, 2012). That ethnic minority communities in the United States are so disproportionately affected by incarceration creates a compelling social justice rationale for study of the varieties of post-incarceration outcomes.

### **Increasing Numbers of Years Served**

In addition to the racial composition of America's prisons, another striking feature of American incarceration in recent decades is the pattern of increasingly long prison terms. Since the 1980s, a "tough on crime" culture and accompanying legislative and judicial changes in the U.S. have resulted in longer prison sentences as well as prisoners serving a greater proportion of their mandated sentences. Mandatory sentencing guidelines have set minimum sentences for certain categories of crime, and so-called "three-strike" laws have ordained lengthy sentences of at least twenty-five years upon an offender's third felony conviction (HRW report, p. 24). These so-called "front end" policy changes (p.24) have been accompanied by legislative measures designed to ensure that prisoners don't serve de facto sentences dramatically shorter than their assigned sentences. Such measures include truth-in-sentencing guidelines or prohibitions on parole for certain types of offenses. In addition, parole itself has become more strictly monitored, with the result that higher numbers of people are returned to prison because of relatively minor parole violations (Steen & Opsal, 2007). As a result of these changes, the average length of prison stays has increased by 34% between 1990 and 2009 (Pew Center on the States, 2009).

### **An Aging Prison Population**

One result of longer prison sentences is an aging prison population, a phenomenon that has been described as the "graying" of America's prisons (Reimer, 2008). The data are

unmistakable – a larger proportion of America’s incarcerated persons are over the age of fifty today than in past eras, and this is a trend likely to continue into the future.<sup>2</sup> According to data reported by the National Institute of Corrections, while in 1981 there were 8,853 state and federal prisoners aged 55 or older, by 2010 this number was 124,900 (American Correctional Association, 2010; American Civil Liberties Union, 2012, p. i). Between just 1995 and 2010, the number of persons aged 55 or older incarcerated in the United States almost quadrupled (Osborne, p. 2). This shift in the demographic profile of inmates has significant ramifications, as those aging behind bars necessitate greater health-care expenditure and expertise (Williams, Stern, Mellow, Safer & Greifinger, 2012; Curtin, 2007). Indeed, the apparent gap between the needs of the increasing numbers of elderly prisoners and the ability of state and federal correctional facilities to meet those needs is such that both the American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch issued major reports on the human costs of this problem (ACLU, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2012). Nor is such concern limited to external watchdogs, as the Department of Justice has itself acknowledged the extent of the problem in a recent report (2015), finding that older prisoners were more costly to incarcerate than younger prisoners and that the Bureau of Prisons generally lacked the physical infrastructure and appropriately-trained staff necessary to meet the needs of this population.

One issue that is particularly salient when evaluating the financial and human cost of incarceration of the elderly is the consistently negative relationship that has been found between age and recidivism, with likelihood of re-entry into the criminal justice system much less likely for prisoners released when in their more advanced years than for those released in their youth. The Department of Justice cites the Office of the Inspector General’s finding that 15 percent of

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<sup>2</sup> Note that, due to a phenomenon known as “accelerated aging,” prisoners’ de facto age, as reflected, for instance, in health outcomes, is often 10 -15 years older than their chronological age (Reimer, 2008).

“aging inmates” in their sample were re-arrested within three years of release, compared to a 41 percent rate for federal prisoners overall (DOJ report, p. iii). Scholarly research, too, has consistently found age to be an important factor in recidivism prediction. For example, in a rigorous prospective study of 273 Canadian inmates over 24 years, Olver and Wong (2015) find age at time of release to significantly predict recidivism outcome, even controlling for the offender’s level of psychopathy as measured by Hare’s Psychopathy Checklist-Revised. Interestingly, even offenders rating high on psychopathy – sometimes thought to be a temperamental factor rather impervious to change – were less likely to re-offend the older their age at the time of release. There is likewise evidence that age reduces the likelihood of sexual offense recidivism (Hanson, 2002), though there is also evidence that, for this particular subgroup of offenders, age at first offense may be a better predictor of recidivism (Rice & Harris, 2013). Still, the general consensus is that, with the risk of releasing older inmates significantly less than the risk of releasing their younger counterparts, it may not make much sense for prisons to bear the full financial burden of maintaining this population.

Given the undeniable trend of an aging population of incarcerated persons, as well as the reality of the costs – financial and otherwise – created by such a situation, there is compelling incentive to reexamine the rationale for extremely long sentences for violent crime. To put it differently, there is good reason to revisit the familiar arguments that are made when the issue of granting parole to those convicted of violent crime is on the agenda. Consider, for instance, a draft letter written by Citizens against Homicide, an NGO dedicated to supporting homicide victims’ families in their attempts to deny convicted perpetrators parole. The letter details the crime the incarcerated person was convicted of committing in 1976, states that he has previously

been denied parole seven times, and asserts that he has “complete disregard for human life and lack of conscience and remorse.” It goes on to assert:

Because of his complete disregard for human life and lack of conscience and remorse, justice demands that this convicted murderer be denied parole. [Incarcerated Name redacted] made a personal choice to hunt down and then execute [Victim Name Redacted] and must continue to accept the consequences of his actions. He must remain in prison so that he can never again harm another innocent human. [Victim Name Redacted] does not get a second chance to live; she is gone forever. Therefore, [Incarcerated Name redacted] does not deserve a second chance or the privilege of freedom. (CAH, June 17, 2015).

Two (implicit) assumptions seem particularly worthy of examination from the perspective of the psychological literature: 1) involvement in violence as indicative of pathology in the individual and 2) such pathology as relatively unlikely to change over the course of the individual’s lifespan. Taken together, such assumptions create a compelling justification for long-term incarceration, insofar as releasing such a person places society at risk of additional victimization perpetrated by violent predators, surely an outcome most would wish to avoid. If these assumptions don’t hold, however, long-term incarceration as the default response to violent crime becomes less tenable. Given the weighty policy implications of these assumptions about the psychological origins of violent behavior, let us examine them in turn.

### **Violent Crime, Rehabilitation, and Development across the Lifespan**

Recent developments in personality research call into question the assumptions listed above about both the sources of criminality and its continuity across the lifespan. Let us first consider the evidence about individual factors that may distinguish those who are incarcerated for violent crime from other persons.

On one hand, there is evidence that persons who commit crimes differ from non-offending community samples along a number of personality dimensions. Much of this research

is rooted in early research on personality that emphasized traits thought to have biological origins, to manifest early in life as an individual's temperament, and to remain relatively, if imperfectly, stable across the lifespan. The literature on what came to be known as the "Big Five" personality characteristics – extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientious, and openness to experience (John et al, 2008; McCrae & Costa, 2008) – finds significant variation across individuals in the distribution of these traits and finds significant relationships between these traits and outcomes of interest, such as educational attainment or career objectives. Consistent with such claims, research has demonstrated a significant relationship between certain traits and a number of variables related to criminality. In a meta-analysis of studies evaluating the relationship between Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI) scores and criminal offending/rule infraction, Gardner, Boccaccini, Bitting, and Edens (2015) find consistent evidence that elevated scores on the Antisocial Features, Aggression, and Violence Potential index scales, respectively, are robustly correlated to offending. Sensation-seeking, impulsivity, and psychopathy have also been associated with greater risk of criminality (Zuckerman, 2007; Grann et al, 1999).

On the other hand, there is ample evidence that larger environmental factors influence likelihood of incarceration, such that any simplistic notion of utter individual responsibility is belied (Webster & Kingston, 2014; Elbogen et al, 2012). Despite complexities that make ascertaining causality challenging, there is compelling evidence that poverty, race, and education level significantly affect both the commission of crime, especially violent crime, and likelihood of arrest, conviction, and incarceration for that crime. Though a systematic review of the large literatures in both sociology and psychology on the environmental risk factors for incarceration is beyond the scope of this chapter, a brief summary of the main findings is necessary

groundwork for this project. There is clear evidence, first, that economic disadvantage, whether measured in absolute (according to the poverty line) or relative (according to social economic stratum) terms, (is associated with higher risk of crime commission. The evidence is particularly clear for the most violent crimes – particularly homicide.<sup>3</sup> While disproportionate representation of economically disadvantaged persons in lesser crime statistics may be attributable to a reporting bias, this bias is minimized for homicide (Kivikuori & Lehti, 2006; Pridemore, 2002; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1999). Being male is consistently found to be a risk factor for violent crime, though there is also evidence that this gap is narrowing – but far from disappearing – in recent years (Kruttschnitt, 2013). As is the case with trauma, there is also evidence of intergenerational transmission of incarceration risk, with children of incarcerated parents at higher risk of being incarcerated themselves (Ng, Sarri, & Stoffregen, 2013). Racial minority status as a risk factor for incarceration in the United States, discussed in greater detail above, should also be kept in mind.<sup>4</sup> The general point here is that the scholarly literature provides ample evidence of a host of factors beyond the individual level that make incarceration more likely.

Similarly challenging to ideas about immutable individual culpability is recent research about change across the lifespan in personality traits. This question arises in terms of the extent of “differential continuity” across the distinct developmental stages in the human life course. The notion of “differential continuity” refers to the extent to which an individual’s particular cluster of Big Five characteristics continues to distinguish him or her from other individuals over time (McAdams & Olson, 2010). The degree of differential continuity demonstrated by individuals –

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<sup>3</sup> Note that economic disadvantage is also a significant risk factor for death by homicide. See Kposowa, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Though not environmental level variables per se (though themselves influenced by such variables), mental illness and trauma history are also associated with greater risk of both violence and incarceration. See Asberg & Renk, 2013; Elbogen et al., 2012; Friedman, 2006; Shaw et al., 2006.

especially across significant temporal junctures – is debated. On the one hand, there is evidence that individual traits tend to stabilize (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000) between the ages of 50 and 70, with relatively high inter-temporal correlations – around .70 - of traits. On other hand, there is also evidence that individuals can demonstrate significant differences in traits across time, with the differences proportional to the duration of passed time (Fraleley & Roberts 2005).

Drawing on these and other recent research developments, McAdams and Olson (2010) argue compellingly that 1) there is evidence of developmentally normative change in “Big Five” personality characteristics – including ones expected to predict criminality – over the lifespan; 2) this shift in traits over time can be partly explained by the complexities of personality, which is formed not only from innate factors but also through both the individual’s adaptation to context and the individual’s attempts to make meaning. In the language of McAdams and Olson, the individual is not only an actor with a specific disposition, but also an agent actively constructing her life and an author generating her life narrative (p. 519). Each of these points holds significant implications for our understanding of an individual’s capacity for violence across the life course.

First, though popular discourse on violence tends to suggest that violence reveals an immutable core feature of the self, there is evidence both that growth in the direction of greater maturity, responsibility, and socially conscious behavior is normatively expectable as humans approach middle age and that this pattern may be as true – if not more so – for incarcerated persons as for the civilian population. As McAdams and Olson summarize, there is significant evidence that “as people move into and through their early-to-middle adult years, they appear to become...less inclined to moodiness and negative emotions, more responsible and caring, more focused on long-term tasks and plans, and less susceptible to extreme risk-taking and the

expression of unbridled internal impulses” (p. 523). In general, the pattern is one of increased conscientiousness and agreeableness and decreased neuroticism as the individual approaches middle to late adulthood (Donnellan & Lucas 2008; Helson & Soto 2005; Jackson et al. 2009). Of course, that this is a general pattern does not mean that it is observed equally across all individuals. Strikingly, though, there is evidence that those who change the least are those who are already high on indicators of maturity (Donnellan et al 2007; Johnson et al 2007), which itself suggests that incarcerated persons – persons who, per the discussion above, score higher than average on traits of impulsivity and aggressiveness – are unlikely to be in this most stagnant category. Improvement in the direction of greater maturity could be thought of as a kind of regression to the mean for those who are to some extent outliers at the time of their incident arrest. More direct evidence of the capacity for those convicted of violent crimes to undergo significant personality change as they age is demonstrated in declining rates of within-prison rule violations across age (HRW report) and in personal anecdotes of transformation during periods of incarceration. Further, developmental change is one compelling explanation of the puzzle that, while variation in Big Five personality traits can predict initial incarceration, it does a poor job predicting recidivism, particularly as the age of the incarcerated individual increases (Downey, 2015; Maruna, 2001). Per the discussion above, normative developmental change is also a compelling explanation for the negative correlation between age and recidivism rate.

Just as the consistency of traits across the lifespan has been questioned, other scholars have challenged the emphasis on traits as the most important aspect of personality variation among individuals. Such scholars have drawn attention to other significant types of human difference that are relevant to predicting behavioral outcomes of interest to psychologists. Walter Mischel (2004) emphasized, for instance, features of an individual’s adaptation to context that

helped to enlighten the so-called “personality paradox,” the simultaneous presence of both significant intra-individual consistency (for instance in certain traits, as discussed above) and significant situational and temporal variability. Mischel and other scholars rejecting the trait-centric focus of much of the personality literature draw attention to the role of such factors as motivation, values, and the construction of goals for the self, aspects that in McAdams’ view emphasize the role of human agency. Goals, like traits, may show certain patterns of development across the life course, with, for instance, goals related to societal engagement, such as the desire to contribute meaningfully to one’s community, assuming greater importance in middle and later adulthood (McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan, 1993; Peterson and Duncan, 2007).

A second alternative to the trait model highlights the individual’s efforts to derive meaning from life experiences through the construction of a life narrative that forms the basis of a narrative identity. This narrative identity is “the storied understanding that a person develops regarding how he or she came to be and where she is going in life” (McAdams & Olson 2012, p. 527). Particularly of interest is research that demonstrates that some types of life narratives are more likely than others to be associated with positive psychological and life outcomes (Adler, Kissel, & McAdams 2006; Bauer, McAdams, & Sakaeda, 2005). For instance, the prolific work of McAdams and his colleagues has argued that highly generative adults – adults who demonstrate a high degree of investment in improving the lives of future generations – tend to report narratives with salient themes of redemption, in which a trial or negative experience is over time transformed into something positive (McAdams & Guo, 2015).

Shadd Maruna (2001) has found evidence of the centrality of narrative variables in his innovative analysis of the factors influencing crime desistance versus persistence in a sample of

“career criminals” in Liverpool, England. Those subjects who had successfully desisted from crime – defined as those who had refrained from committing crime for one year and professed their commitment to continuing to refrain – did not differ from those who continued to commit crime on personality dimensions or on a number of other factors the criminological literature suggests might predict recidivism versus desistance. The desisters, like the persisters, rated as less conscientious and less agreeable than did the average adult on measures of personality. Both groups, too, reported histories of economic disadvantage, abuse and neglect, and drug or alcohol abuse; both had spent a large percentage of their adult lives incarcerated. The differences lay, not in traits, but in their narrative understanding of their lives – their stories of how they had gotten to the present day, and how they would carry themselves into an imagined future. The crime persisters, Maruna finds, tend to tell their narratives according to a “condemnation script” in which early life events – poverty, abuse – lead almost inexorably to a life of crime, to a society that rejects and excludes them from all respectable roles. They have little sense of agency about the future, as the odds seem hopelessly stacked against them. In contrast, the desisters’ narratives tend to follow a “redemption script,” which emphasizes a core self that is good, an almost exaggerated sense of personal agency, and a commitment to making positive contributions in their lives. Whereas the persisters manage the shame of their criminal pasts by projecting judgment onto a callous and unfair society, the desisters do so by connecting to positive strands of their identity that they perceive as there all along and by investing in positive acts.

Two aspects of Maruna’s narrative argument are of particular interest for our purposes here. First, the condemnation narrative is in some respects more accurate, whereas the redemption narrative is more adaptive. Maruna makes the comparison here to the research

demonstrating that the predictions of depressed persons are sometimes more accurate than are the predictions of a nonclinical sample (Alloy & Abramson, 1989). Yet, this hyper realism seems to forestall adaptive demonstrations of agency. In the redemption narrative, the challenges that stand in the way of a clean life are of little concern, as the individual's commitment to going straight is paramount. Second, the mechanisms the desister employs to protect a sense of a core good self that can achieve a positive future are the same mechanisms that are rejected in many rehabilitation programs as attempts to avoid responsibility for their actions. Maruna notes that desisters tend to adopt distancing linguistic tactics when discussing shameful acts in their past; for instance, they may use the passive voice or use "we" or "you" instead of "I." Whereas many programs working with offenders seem to advocate for acceptance of full responsibility – no ifs, ands, or buts - on the part of the "guilty," in Maruna's analysis this distancing or excuse making can actually serve a constructive end, the preservation of a sense of the self as good that can then be expected to do good going forward.

How do such broader conceptualizations of human personality relate to the experiences of persons serving lengthy prison sentences? Much like the evidence on change across the lifespan in distributions of common personality traits, the literature on adaptation and narrative highlights potential markers of growth that may be indicative of some prisoners' capacity for transformation over time in a more pro-social direction. With this in mind, let us turn now to the function of incarceration and factors within the prison system that may facilitate or inhibit human capacity for change over time.

### **The Function of Incarceration: Political Logic vs. Psychological Logic**

The "tough on crime" policies that have become especially popular in the United States over the past several decades imply a certain view of the meaning and function of incarceration.

Such a view is a retributive justice model, in which it is thought that heavy sentences are warranted for serious crimes because such sentences act as a deterrent against further crime commission. Importantly, there is very little evidence that such measures are actually effective at deterring crime and some evidence that they may even be detrimental under certain circumstances. Several meta-analyses have found increased prison sentences to be associated with increased rates of recidivism (Gendreau, Goggin, & Cullen, 1999; Smith et al, 2002). Others have found little evidence that harsh punishment deters crime in general or in regard to the specific crimes (such as driving while intoxicated) for which harsh penalties might be targeted (Durlauf & Naugin, 2011; Wagenaar et al., 2007). The possible reasons for the apparent empirical failure of the retributive model are multifarious. One pathway is the deleterious impact of prison itself, especially for less severe offenders who are placed in proximity to more severe offenders. Another potential pathway concerns the negative impact of incarceration history on employment prospects and other lawful opportunities after release from prison, an impact that may be compounded as time in prison and distance from civilian influences increase.

One potential source of the failure of the retributive model is of particular interest to the creators of the Longtermers' Project and its accompanying curriculum, *Coming to Terms*. This concerns the view of the relationship of the self and other that is implied by a "tough on crime" perspective. The view that one has harmed another person and so needs to be severely punished is an attempt, one might say, to elevate the victim – the person harmed by crime – by devaluing, at least temporarily, the individual. The offender rectifies the harm done by taking on the label of badness due to the crime that has been committed and suffering as a result. In this way, concern for self and concern for other are viewed as being fundamentally at odds.

The Longtermers' Project, in contrast, is motivated by the belief that compassion for self and compassion for other are actually complementary constructs. This is because a system that highlights one's intrinsic badness and worthiness of punishment is unlikely to increase one's concern for others potentially and actually harmed by one's behavior. Instead, it is likely to cause retrenched focus on the needs of the self to survive in a hostile context. On the other hand, providing a space to consider the complex sources of one's violent behavior and an acknowledgement that the incident crime need not be seen as fully definitive of the self can actually increase one's capacity to care about the other.

The idea that views of self and other may be systematically connected finds support in both psychodynamic theory and empirical research. Object-relations theory focuses on the lasting effects of the mental representations that humans form of the interactions between themselves and other important people (objects, in the object-relational parlance) in their lives (Diamond, Blatt, Stayner & Kaslow, 1995). These representations – often rooted in early experience - are thought to influence attitudes and behaviors in the present. Though object relational theory does not imply that one's views of self and other are necessarily identical, it does argue that views of self and other are inextricably linked. Zimmerman (2013) has found supporting empirical evidence that violence against others increases risk of suicidal behavior. Though this is the opposite direction of effect posited here, what is striking is the evidence that harm to self and others may go together. Research on the development of empathy across the lifespan (McDonald & Messinger, in press) also supports the notion that concern for the other is a developmental process that depends to some degree on the security of the self. In sum, there are good theoretical and empirical reasons to expect compassion for self and compassion for others to go together.

Given the evidence against the efficacy of the retributive model (discussed above), the question arises of the sources of its apparent popularity, particularly but not exclusively in the American context. The answer may lie partly in political incentives. Victims and their families constitute a powerful political block<sup>5</sup> and are joined by those committed for ideological reasons to a “tough on crime” policy. The result is that bodies choosing to grant prisoners parole and the elected officials with ultimate authority for such bodies assume significant risk when deciding to grant parole to someone incarcerated for violence (Vilcica, 2018). Not only is such an action likely to generate significant resistance from victims’ families and the organizations that support them – itself a source of negative publicity for affected politicians – but there is risk of even more damaging negative repercussions if the parolee turns out to have been a bad bet and commits another act of violence.<sup>6</sup> The result is that there is some tension between political incentives for risk-averse action and psychological logic in terms of the human potential for change.

### **Effective Prison Programs and the Challenge of Reentry**

No matter one’s perspective on the parole process, that reentry into civilian life is challenging for both formerly incarcerated persons and their communities is uncontested. Raphael (2011), for instance, systematically documents the variables that impede male prisoners’ reentry into the workforce, variables that include low levels of formal education, low levels of employment experience, and stigma related to incarceration history (p.193). There is also evidence that this burden is not held by the formerly imprisoned alone, as significant risk attaches to being the child of an incarcerated or formerly incarcerated person (Kjellstrand &

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<sup>5</sup> Of course, it is not the case that all families of victims advocate retributive policies. However, those that do are likely to find a sympathetic audience, given the salience of victim suffering.

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent discussion of both political incentives facing parole boards and racial inequity in New York state parole decisions, see Winerip, Schwartz, & Gebeloff, 2016.

Eddy, 2011). Given, then, the burdens of reentry and the threat of recidivism, what is known about the factors that facilitate successful reentry, particularly factors that can be influenced via well-designed interventions?

There is a growing body of research on the effectiveness of restorative justice programs in the United States. Two such programs of note are the Insight Prison Project (IPP), which began at San Quentin State Prison in 1997 (Beckett & Kartman, 2016), and Bridges to Life (BTL), a three-month, faith-based restorative justice program for offenders nearing their release date (Armour, Sage, Rubin, & Windsor, 2005). Some research has amassed about the efficacy of these interventions as well as their likely mechanisms of action. One major meta-analysis found that restorative justice programs result in greater victim and offender satisfaction, compliance with restitution agreements, and lower recidivism rates when compared to traditional justice programs (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005). However, Latimer and his colleagues urge caution in interpreting these results due to methodological challenges, particularly self-selection into many restorative justice programs. In a recent study on mechanisms of action in the BTL program, Armour and Sliva (2018) found that the program facilitated change through productive new group norms as well as change in offenders' "self-schemas...which prompt them to test and act upon new possible selves through the group process" (p.759). There is some evidence that restorative justice programs are particularly effective for crimes involving violence (Beckett & Kartman), though restorative justice programs for nonviolent crimes are more common. The current study seeks to advance the literature on restorative justice programs through a multi-method investigation of the effects of the Coming to Terms curriculum on a subset of offenders incarcerated for their role in violent acts. Before elucidating study hypotheses, the goals of this study will be revisited in light of the recent and important research of Shadd Maruna.

## **Present Study: Reconsidering Maruna**

Given that, as discussed above, Shadd Maruna's work has investigated similar questions of transformation in a sample of formerly incarcerated men, it is worth considering how this dissertation project might further contribute to Maruna's exceptional work. Though his work employed a rigorous, well-conceived methodology and produced fascinating insights, as with any study, his work possessed some limitations. Foremost is perhaps the question of generalizability. Maruna makes clear that his relatively small sample has characteristics that may complicate the drawing of general conclusions. His sample was limited to one city (Liverpool, England) and employed a targeted sampling strategy rather than a probability frame. This means, as Maruna readily conceded, that there is a significant likelihood that the groups of persisters and desisters he gathered in his study may differ in notable ways from persisters and desisters in the larger population. Additionally, the sample consisted overwhelmingly of drug users and those arrested for drug-related crimes (including robberies motivated by the desire to secure money for drugs). The sociopolitical context was a city that had been economically devastated and, partially as a result, then ravaged by the heroin epidemic. To be clear, the sample studied here is also small and not fully representative of the larger population; this study contributes to the larger literature partly by enlightening a different population from that highlighted by Maruna. Moreover, the population studied here – persons incarcerated for violent crime – constitutes a significantly larger proportion of the total population incarcerated in state prisons compared to those incarcerated primarily for drug-related offenses. According to a report from the Prison Policy Initiative, as of 2018, over 50% of inmates in state prison were convicted of violent crimes, compared to about 15% incarcerated for drug offenses. Thus, the

population studied here differs from Maruna's in ways highly relevant to important policy questions.

Further, Maruna's research question and methodology, while certainly related to the themes of this dissertation, differ markedly from the strategy employed here. Maruna sought to investigate the factors that distinguished desisters from persisters, with an eye for enlightening the processes by which people are ultimately able to desist from entrenched, destructive patterns. Consistent with this research question, he worked backwards from the empirical outcomes of interest, desistance versus persistence. This study, while motivated also by a desire to enlighten post-incarceration processes, frames the logic of comparison around an independent variable of interest, participation in the Longtermers Project. Does this program create lasting change on outcomes of interest, change that is observable at least one year after program completion? Is there further evidence of a connection between narrative themes and positive post-incarceration outcomes (in this case resilience), and is this relationship influenced by completion of the Longtermers' Project? An additional important feature of this work, in comparison to that of Maruna, is the focus on a population that has been incarcerated for many years for crimes that frequently involved violence. Thus, this project is motivated in particular by the desire to understand how an individual copes with a past in which he or she has played some role in the physical harm of another human being. Though this isn't to say that the people involved in violent crime necessarily differ dramatically from people involved in non-violent crime, there may nevertheless be distinct challenges in grappling with shame and maintaining a positive core self in the aftermath of the perpetuation of violence. For instance, in "Mea Culpa," Maruna's fascinating chapter on persisters and desisters' negotiation of shame and responsibility, he notes that the desisters frequently speak of making amends or giving back in quite general terms, for

instance by making positive contributions to society or sharing their stories with younger generations. The emphasis is far less on repairing specific wrongs done. Is the process of coping similar when one knows of an identifiable person (or persons) who has been significantly harmed, perhaps even killed, at least partly through one's actions? Several factors complicate answering this question. First, the weight of the harm done may make it harder to push out of mind, even as the task of coping psychologically with that burden becomes far more daunting. The situation is further complicated by external actors – such as parole boards – who strongly incentivize at least rhetorical indications that the individual accepts *complete responsibility* for his/her actions.

The question of causality arises in interpreting Maruna's work. Implicit in his account is the view that transformation in one's life narrative at least partly facilitates processes conducive to desistance. When he engages the question of causality directly, he hedges a bit. "Do changes in a person's self-narrative occur causally prior to desistance from crime or does desisting from crime simply lead someone to change their identity story?" he asks. "Probably both" is the answer (p. 42). He goes on to elaborate the view that a certain type of narrative can play a key role in the maintenance of a commitment to desistance. Though he is not in a position to test this causal claim, that he believes that narratives hold at least some causal power is evident in his statement that narrative, far more than personality, may be amenable to change via intervention (p. 39). If the narrative changes, then, perhaps, too, can the behavior. Drawing on Maruna's work, the current project is well placed to *begin* assessing claims both about narrative's amenability to intervention and about the possible consequences of narrative intervention. In the background lies the question: where do adaptive narratives come from? The Longtermers' Project answers that adaptive narratives are more likely to be formed under three conditions: 1)

when time and a relatively safe space are reserved for the purpose of reflection; 2) when in the presence of peers with similar experiences who can reduce shame and encourage healthy identification; and 3) when the participant is encouraged to develop compassion for him/herself alongside compassion for those who have been affected by his/her behavior.

### **Outcome Variables of Interest**

To begin to investigate the impact of the Longtermers Project, a number of variables were deemed relevant. Given the assumption that compassion for self and compassion for other are not at odds but instead reciprocally linked in this population, measures of self and other compassion were essential. Additionally, a number of variables were chosen as indicators of adaptive functioning in the transition from life inside to life in the civilian world. These include resilience, generativity, and self-efficacy. Resilience refers to adaptive coping with the ordinary setbacks of life, generativity to healthy investment in leaving a positive legacy for future generations, and self-efficacy to confidence in one's agency across a number of dimensions. Given the relevance of guilt and shame to formation of a healthy sense of self, guilt and shame proneness were also investigated, as were the narrative themes highlighted by McAdams and Maruna.

Each of these measures will be detailed further in the chapter that follows. Below are the specific study hypotheses.

### **Study Hypotheses**

***Hypothesis One:*** Participants in the Coming to Terms Curriculum [hereafter Program Participants] will demonstrate greater compassion for self than will comparable non-participants.

***Hypothesis Two:*** Program Participants will demonstrate greater compassion for others than will comparable non-participants.

***Hypothesis Three:*** Program Participants will evidence greater psychological resilience than will non-participants.

***Hypothesis Four:*** Program Participants will endorse greater levels of generativity than will non-participants.

***Hypothesis Five:*** Program Participants will demonstrate greater self efficacy than will non-participants.

***Hypothesis Six:*** Program Participants will endorse higher levels of responsivity to guilt than will non-participants.

***Hypothesis Seven:*** Program Participants will demonstrate lower levels of shame orientation than will non-participants.

***Hypothesis Eight:*** For both program participants and non-participants, compassion for self and compassion for other will be positively correlated.

***Hypothesis Nine:*** Generativity and self-efficacy will be positively correlated with resilience for both program participants and non-participants.

***Hypothesis Ten:*** Program Participants will produce life narratives that display the McAdams' redemptive themes to a greater degree than will non-participants.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Method**

#### **Overview**

This dissertation undertook an initial assessment of the Longtermers' Project by making use of the significant number of program participants who have since been released from prison. Control subjects were selected who roughly mirrored the intervention sample in racial diversity, length of time served, and lapse of time since release from prison. These two groups were compared across a number of dimensions, which will be described further below: 1) resilient coping; 2) compassion for self; 3) compassion for others; 4) generativity; 5) self efficacy; 6) guilt and shame-proneness; and 7) life narrative themes. This chapter will first describe the general method and logic of comparison employed before introducing the rationale and method for each outcome variable of interest.

#### **Logic of Comparison: A Hard Test**

In order to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the Longtermers Project, program participants who have since been released from prison were compared alongside formerly incarcerated persons who did not participate in the program but who were otherwise connected to the Osborne Association or another organization that provides comparable services to formerly incarcerated persons. To ensure rough comparability across groups, the control group was selected to match the intervention group on the key variables of length of time served and duration of time elapsed since release from prison. An approximate frequency matching approach was utilized, in which overall group distributions, rather than individual subjects, are matched. This matching process was designed to minimize systematic variation between the

groups that was not accounted for by the main explanatory variable of interest, completion of the Longtermers' Project. While groups were not explicitly matched on the variable of race, the researcher monitored control selection to ensure that the control group was roughly equivalent to the intervention group in racial and ethnic diversity. Appendix A displays matching categories and distributions within each treatment condition.

The logic of comparison employed here set up a hard test for assessing the impact of the Longtermers Project in several ways. First, it should be noted that the Longtermers Project itself might be thought of as choosing to focus on hard cases, as the participants are overwhelmingly people who have had some involvement in violent crime. This differs from some programs that aim instead at the “low-hanging fruit” of the wrongfully convicted or those awarded lengthy sentences that seem grossly disproportionate to the non-violent crimes committed.<sup>7</sup> The project is explicitly not directed at either individuals who maintain their innocence or individuals whose sentences are clearly disproportionate to their crimes. Rather, this project contends that change is possible, not only in cases of wrongful guilt or nonviolent crime, but even in cases in which violence is a central feature. This isn't to say, however, that these cases don't often involve complicating factors such as poverty and trauma endured by the convicted offender; indeed, it may be a central feature of the American prison system that such experiences are commonplace among the incarcerated.

Second, aside from the ambitious focus of the project itself, this attempt to evaluate the program's impact is a hard test due to the temporal delay that has transpired between the completion of the program and this assessment. This dissertation focuses on those already

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<sup>7</sup> In recent years, for instance, there has been a great deal of attention to Americans serving life sentences for non-violent drug offenses, and the drug wars are a central focus of Alexander (2012) in the *New Jim Crow*. See ACLU (2013); Pilkington (2013).

released from prison due to both practical reasons and scholarly ones. To start with the latter, those transitioning back to life on the outside are of particular interest, given the ample literature (see previous chapter) about the obstacles they face to reintegrating into civilian life and avoiding a return to prison. On a more practical level, there are feasibility concerns that make undertaking research with those currently incarcerated particularly difficult, as Department of Corrections' approval of every aspect of the research is required. While there are obviously good reasons, both practical and intellectual, for focusing on post-release participants, the time lag between project completion and data collection also poses a challenge. In psychotherapy research, for example, it is common to evaluate a program immediately after the completion of the program, and then again after a certain time delay, with the expectation that in many cases the effect will decline over time. Thus, if the program's effects truly withstand the test of time, this is a testament to the powerful effect of the intervention.

Third, the choice of comparison group ensures that the effect of the intervention itself is isolated from other related elements, particularly the involvement of an NGO such as the Osborne Association or Fortune Society, both of which serve formerly incarcerated persons. Because the Osborne Association operates the Longtermers' Project, program participants are tapped into the organization, aware of and able to access its resources as they transition back to life outside prison. Thus, it is possible that the material and non-material factors associated with Osborne involvement, rather than the elements of the Coming to Terms curriculum *per se*, are responsible for any effect. To reduce this risk, the comparison group was drawn from formerly incarcerated persons receiving support from the Osborne Association or a parallel organization. Thus, while these persons did not participate in the particular program under evaluation here, they did receive other benefits proxied by NGO support, so that any effect found can be

presumed to be due to the Coming to Terms program itself and not simply organizational support.

## **Procedure**

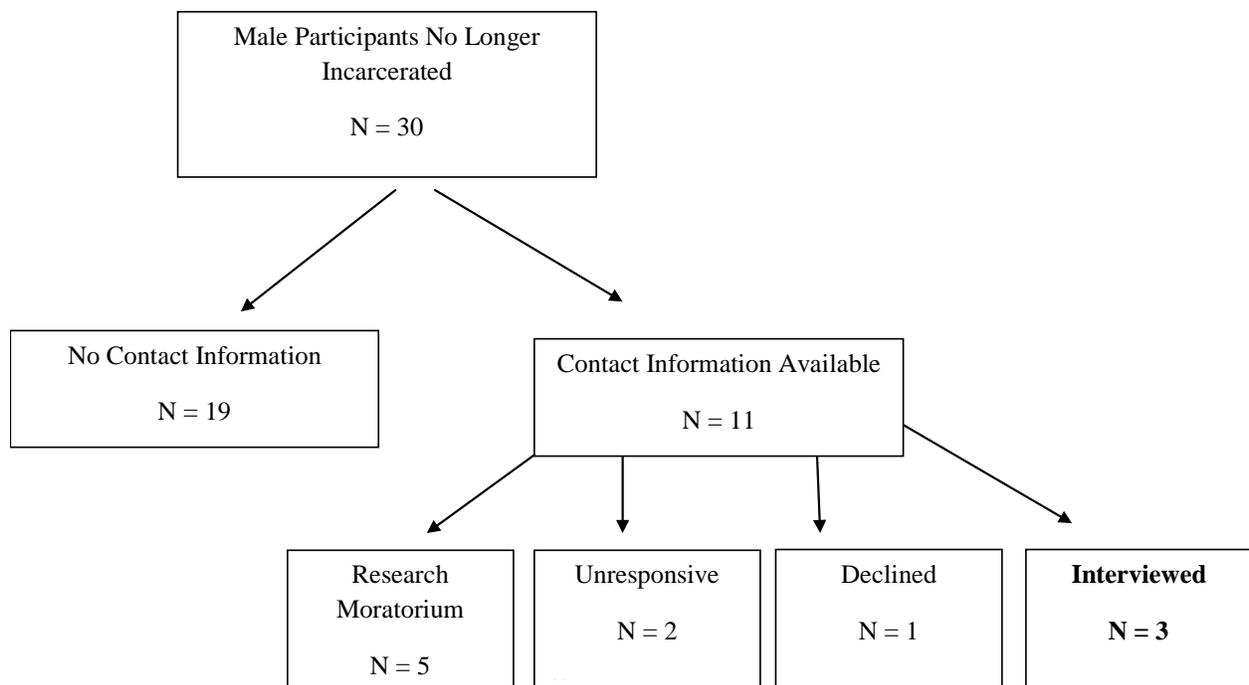
### **Participants**

Intervention and control subjects were recruited from the population of formerly incarcerated persons residing in the greater New York City area. Due to certain features of the program's operation, slightly different recruitment procedures were used for intervention and control subjects, as well as for male and female intervention subjects. Figure 1 depicts the recruitment process for male intervention subjects. To recruit these subjects, the researcher first reviewed the records from the Longterm Project's ten years in operation and collected a list of program participants, the date of their participation, and their Department of Corrections Identification Number or DIN. Using this list and the information publically available on the website of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (2017), the researcher then determined which participants had secured release from prison and were thus potentially available for the study. Thirty men were identified who had participated in the program while incarcerated but had since secured release. They participated in the Coming to Terms curriculum from years 2009 to 2017 and secured release between January 2012 and May 2017. Given that contact information was maintained for only a very small sample of intervention participants, program staff, program alumni, and Osborne Association staff were asked to contact program participants with whom they were still in touch and to ask for consent to be contacted by the researcher. Some form of contact information was available for eleven male participants. Of these, contact information seemed out of date or inaccurate for two participants. Five participants were locatable but were not permitted to participate by another

program with which they were involved. This program, the Hudson Link for Higher Education, had issued a moratorium on its graduates' participation in research. The researcher attempted to secure an exemption from the program director but was ultimately unsuccessful. Four participants gave the researcher consent to contact; of these, one declined. Three male interview subjects, or 10% of the potential universe of male program participants believed to be no longer incarcerated, were ultimately interviewed.

Figure 1

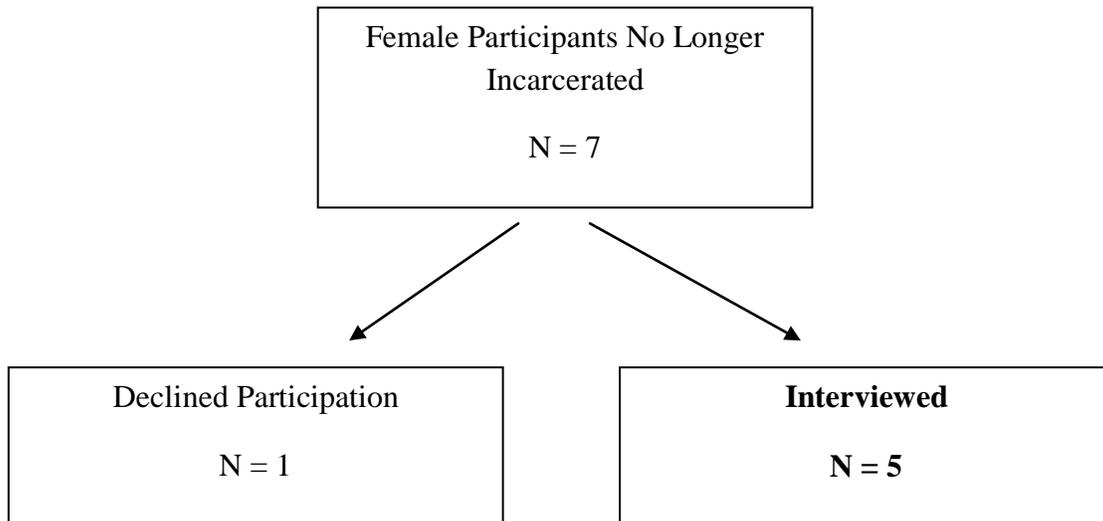
*Recruitment Procedures, Male Intervention Subjects*



In most cases female participants' information was not included in the program's systematic records, largely because the management of the program in the woman's facility – Bedford Hills – was managed separately from the much larger program in the two men's facilities. However, the smaller program size appeared to facilitate closer personal connections between participants and program staff, as program staff possessed contact information for all of the seven known female participants who had secured release from prison. Of these, six consented to contact from the researcher, and all six ultimately participated in the study. Figure 2 presents female intervention subject recruitment pathways. One should note that the recruitment rate for female participants was much higher than that for male participants, despite the significantly larger size of the pool of male intervention subjects. Implications of this differential recruitment success will be considered in the discussion section.

Figure 2

*Recruitment Procedures, Female Intervention Subjects*

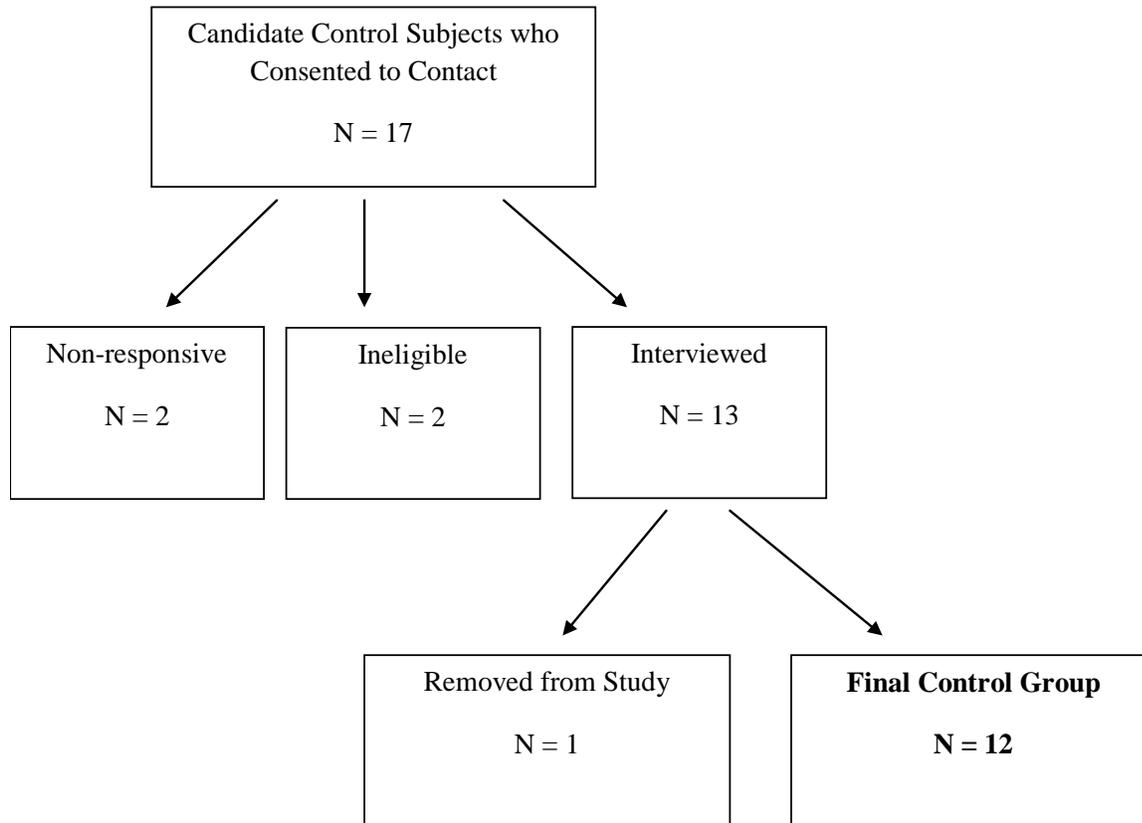


Control participants were recruited who roughly matched intervention subjects on race, length of time served, and time since release. Control subjects were recruited via notification of eligible subjects by Osborne Association staff, as well as by peer-to-peer recruitment of formerly incarcerated persons. Primary eligibility criteria included: 1) incarceration in a state prison for at least ten consecutive years, citizenship or lawful residency in the United States, and comfort with English-language interview procedures. A number of control subjects resided at a residential facility for formerly incarcerated persons located conveniently close to the City College laboratory and administered by the Fortune Society. Via this process, 17 potential control subjects agreed to contact from the researcher. Of these, two did not respond to contact attempts, two did not meet eligibility criteria, and 13 were ultimately interviewed.

One control participant was interviewed but not ultimately included in the study, as he appeared to become disorganized by the interview protocol and was increasingly unable to answer interview questions. The interviewer, a trained clinician, chose to discontinue the protocol and offer the subject supportive engagement to boost his ego functioning prior to termination of the interview. Subject confirmed that he was in regular counseling and was not at risk of harm to self or other. Per the IRB guidelines, this subject was paid in full - \$50 - for his participation. Data was not usable, as the subject was only able to engage with 20% of the interview prompts before becoming disorganized. Interviewer did not continue and did not administer instruments for fear of further dysregulating the subject. Figure 3 displays control recruitment pathways.

Figure 3

*Recruitment of Control Subjects*



Twenty subjects were ultimately included in this study, eight intervention participants and twelve control participants. While over-sampling of control participants is uncommon, given the difficulty of locating intervention participants, it was deemed important to recruit additional subjects to increase the likelihood that relevant quantitative and qualitative data could be gleaned.

## Outcome Measures

### **Narrative protocol.**

Because the narrative protocol is a central aspect of this program evaluation, it is worth explaining in some length why it is particularly suited to the goals of this assessment. First, there is a particular affinity between the narrative life interview as a research technique and the Coming to Terms curriculum assessed here. The curriculum and the group discussion that accompanies it ask the participant to first think about the development of his/her life and the paths that led to the incident crime *before* questions of responsibility taking, empathy for the victim, and apology/making amends are addressed. This is a deliberate pedagogical choice in that the program asserts that is through developing greater awareness of and compassion for the self that compassion for the other can be achieved. Thus, what better way to assess the goals of the project than by evaluating the extent to which program completion has manifested in a general life narrative that looks distinct on key dimensions when compared to those who did not complete the program?

Second, the Narrative Life Interview has emerged in recent years as a promising research technique, with an increasing body of evidence attesting to its reliability and validity. This technique captures the individual's attempts to organize disparate events of his/her life into a coherent plot. Scores on the narrative protocol have been linked to a number of outcomes of interest, including generativity, emotional well-being, and pro-social investment (Adler, Kissel, & McAdams 2006; Bauer, McAdams, & Sakaeda, 2005). That is, there is evidence that some narratives are more adaptive than others, independently of the specific events of which they are composed. In this way, there is a parallel between the narrative life interview protocol and the

Object Relations Inventory, which is scored according to the Differentiation-Relatedness Scale (D-RS) (Diamond et al., 2005).

Not only is there evidence that the narrative life interview is a useful data extraction technique in general, but there is also reason to believe that it is particularly well-suited to the population of interest here. One view of the psychological task facing someone incarcerated for violent crime is to integrate “past bad acts” into his/her life narrative in a way that preserves the idea of the self as valuable, capable of good, and worthy of investment. Though to some extent this is the challenge facing every human being, this is a challenge made all the more difficult for persons in this sample by knowledge of one’s role in violence and one’s exposure to many social reminders of one’s badness. There is good reason, thus, to expect that a question about the life narrative could capture elements of variation important to post-incarceration adjustment. An additional advantage is that this technique captures dimensions of particular interest to the intervention but in a veiled manner that is unlikely to pull for demand characteristics, as the participants are unlikely to guess the program hypotheses.

This method might be viewed as a nice compromise between quantitative and qualitative approaches, in that rich qualitative data is collected, albeit via a rigorous, structured protocol and in a way that lends itself to quantitative analysis of variables through coding of narratives.

### **The interview.**

As described in McAdams (2008), the Life Story Interview is a structured interview individually administered by a trained interviewer. Though the full interview protocol has 22 segments and is expected to take three to five hours, McAdams & Guo recently made use of an abbreviated twelve segment interview designed to take about two hours (2015). Because this

reduced protocol presents less burden to subjects and involves all of the central elements likely to be most relevant to the goals of the study, it was employed here.

The basic task of the subject is to “think about your life like a story” and to title the main chapters of his/her life story. The subject is instructed that the story should have at least two or three chapters and at most about seven. After offering the general life schematic, the individual is asked for specific experiences in his/her life story: a high-point, a low-point, a turning point scene, a positive early memory, a negative early memory, a vivid adult memory, an experience of wisdom, and a religious or spiritual scene. The protocol concludes by asking the subject to imagine how the story will unfold in the future by 1) predicting the next chapter; 2) listing dreams and hopes for the future and 3) describing an anticipated project for the future. See the full protocol, adapted from McAdams & Guo, in Appendix B.

All interviews were conducted by the PI, a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology with over five years of experience as a clinician, following Dan McAdams’ abbreviated Life Story Interview Protocol. In all cases the open-ended narrative interview was administered prior to the completion of study instruments. The order of the six quantitative instruments was randomly determined prior to each interview using a random number sequencer (Random.org, 2018). Demographic questionnaire was always administered last. All subjects consented to audio recording of the interviews, which were then transcribed by a research assistant who was a postdoctoral-level counseling psychology student. Word count of completed transcripts ranged from 2,724 to 20,524, with a mean of 11,210 (SD 4462.51).

### **Scoring the protocol.**

The twenty narrative interviews were coded by two trained research assistants blind to treatment condition and study hypotheses. Both research assistants were Master’s-level graduate

students at Columbia University, one in the School of Social Work, and the other in the Psychology Department at Teacher's College. Following the McAdams and Guo protocol, the interviews were divided into twelve segments, including Life Chapters, eight key life scenes, and three questions about the future. For each segment, each RA was instructed to code for the presence or absence of five themes: Early Advantage, Sensitivity to the Suffering of Others, Moral Steadfastness, Redemption, and Prosocial Goals. Following McAdams and Guo, a sixth scene taken from outside their theoretical framework, that of Contamination, was coded as an alternative hypothesis. The scores for each thematic variable were then summed across the entire interview. The range of potential scores for each theme was thus 0 (theme present in zero interview segments) to 12 (theme present in every interview segment).

Each theme will be briefly described here. Sample texts earning each score can be found in Table 1. Early Advantage refers to the subject's reference to having been especially privileged in some way from early childhood, often by a special relationship, talent, or characteristic. As McAdam & Guo writes, "the narrator suggests that the advantage was experienced early in life and reflects an inherent, long-term quality or position" (p. 478). Sensitivity to suffering is expression of empathy for hardships others experience, as well as demonstration of particular sensitivity to social inequities. Moral steadfastness scores are awarded to subjects who express "religious, ethical, or political values, beliefs and principles" (p. 478) as especially salient, coherent, or longstanding in their lives. Redemption sequences refer to narratives that move from an objectively negative situation to a positive outcome of some sort. Common redemptive arcs include sacrifice, recovery, and personal growth. Prosocial goals are reflected in ambitions to help other people (beyond the circle of one's immediate family) or somehow improve society as a whole (p. 478). Contamination sequences are in some ways the reverse of redemption

sequences. Something that is positive or good is somehow lost, spoiled, or otherwise rendered negative.

Inter-rater reliability was calculated in SPSS v25 from the original set of dichotomous scoring decisions for each theme and segment in the narrative. Because these were dichotomous coding decisions and not ordinal-level, kappa – rather than weighted kappa – was the appropriate statistic. Kappa value was .574 (S.E. .029), a level considered to be modest inter-rater agreement, though it is certainly short of the .7 that is typically desired<sup>8</sup>. Inter-rater agreement was highest for the themes of Early Advantage, Pro-Social Goals, and Contamination Sequences and lowest for the themes of Moral Steadfastness and Sensitivity to the Suffering of Others. Agreement for redemption sequences fell somewhere in the middle. The P.I. reviewed the coding decisions to make sure there were no obvious omissions or errors of commission. Again following the McAdams and Guo protocol, the statistic ultimately employed in the quantitative analysis was the mean of the two coders' ratings. For instance, if one coder judged that the theme of Moral Steadfastness was present in a subject's Chapters segment (thus scoring it 1), and the other coder judged that it was not present (thus scoring it 0), the mean score would be .5. The sum of these scores for the twelve segments was then taken for each theme for each subject, resulting in a score that ranged from 0 to 12. Given that the level of inter-rater reliability was not ideal, as a robustness check quantitative analysis was also conducted using three additional versions of the thematic coding decisions: one employing Rater 1's decisions, one employing Rater 2's decision, and a third scoring a theme as present if either Rater 1 or Rater 2 considered a theme present for a particular scene. This third version of the scoring is consistent with the

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<sup>8</sup> Given this less-than-ideal IRR score, an ideal step would be the selection of a third coder neutral to study hypotheses to arbitrate among the disagreements. Though this is not possible for feasibility reasons at this stage of the project, it is a possible next step in later possible iterations of the project.

recommendations of the McAdams scoring manual, which advises that, when in doubt, subjects should be scored as demonstrating the theme in question. These additional analyses were conducted to ensure that meaningful effects would not be muted by coding disagreements. Results of these robustness checks are presented in the next chapter.

Table 1

*Sample Coding Decisions*

Section	Subject	Sample Text
<b>Early Advantage</b>		
Chapters	Intervention	And uh, it was just great because I learned to be in love with people since I was small cus' I was always around other kids and other people. So going from a Brownie to a girl scout and then becoming a debutant and being put out into society in this beautiful white dress like I was getting married. It was just a thing that my church did and we had a cotillion and you had an escort and you had to learn to do this big curtsy bow and the skirt was like this wide, oh my god. So yeah, I have lots of memories with that. Then I have the other memories of being a ballet dancer, being a model for JC Penny in Montgomery Wards. And also skiing with friends and family members.
Chapters	Control	I feel like I was privileged. I grew up thinking I was privileged. I really did. (Yeah, in what way?) I went to private school, I was spoiled.
<b>Sensitivity to the Suffering of Others</b>		
Low Point	Intervention	I took a chance because I wanted to see her like that, alive, I didn't care how bad it was. And so I was handcuffed and shackled and I was taken out to see my mom. They had shaved off her head because they had to cut her open, stop the bleeding in her brain. And she could hear me, the nurse administrator told me, but she couldn't respond. And I remember little tears coming down the side of her eyes. I don't know, I just kind of felt like my mom needed permission to go and after I told her I loved her so much and that it was okay and that she could go and that I was here for her and that it would be alright, ya know, and that it was okay to let go if that's what she wanted to do. And it was so sad. I remember feeling so helpless and so emotionless. And so right on the spot you thinking about my mom raising me my entire life and being with me through all my stupidity and my negativeness and all my greatness and positiveness also and just being my mother. And now she was in this state and I couldn't do anything for her, so you know.
Turning Point	Control	And when she started addressing the court about her only child and she could never ever have another child and things like that, it blew me, like right off the planet. Like, oh my god, this is someone's mother. It made me reflect on my own mother, like what if that was my own mother addressing the court about me. So um, and this is a turning point.

Section	Subject	Sample Text
		<b>Moral Steadfastness</b>
Next Chapter	Intervention	So my next chapter is creating this wonderful catering business and putting it together with [Business Name]. So a profit business and a nonprofit business and actually having a stream of jobs for formerly incarcerated women and having this wonderful food truck and possibly having this cafe in the New York Women's Building that's being developed. And just feeding a mass of people in New York City, people who love to eat and never sleep, that is my message from [Business Name]. And I just believe that it's going to be a great.
Chapters	Control	I remember feeling like I wanted to give up and um, another young kid that was on Riker's Island for a while, maybe he was 16, showed me scripture in the Bible that said, you know, God is faithful and true to forgive your sins and cleanse you of all unrighteousness. And he talked about our trials and tribulations, giving birth basically to patience and perseverance. And when I realized that, I had an opportunity to have a new lease on life. And I had a son now that I had - no--it was born while I was on Riker's Island, and I wasn't able to hold him until I got upstate. Um..I wanted something better for my son, and I realized that in order for me to give him something better and hopefully, hope he did something better with his life, I had to change myself.
		<b>Redemption Sequences</b>
Vivid Adult Memory	Intervention	But finally I was out and I said, you don't know how much more time you've got left on this earth, make this count. I'm in the last quarter of my life. I'm not in the middle or the first stage. This is not breakfast or lunch for me, I'm at supper or dinner of my life. So I kind of make this part count. That's how I felt, that you may have lost the game in your first quarter, in your second quarter, but your third quarter, you can make it count, baby. (What do you think that says about you or about your life?) Well, I look at myself-- what it says about me-- is resilience, and that I'm not who they said I was. And I have reclaimed my humanity, and I don't look for affirmation from other people about it. I've changed, whether people want to believe it or not, they can't determine it for me, I don't give people that power, I don't give them that opportunity.
Chapters	Control	So what I did was--oh at that time the college program had just come to the facility, so it was very timely. It gave me a sense of, like, purpose and allowed me to take some of the frustration I had built up, feeling like I was, you know, aggrieved or wronged by the system, and I was able to channel that energy into something positive, so I invested myself wholeheartedly into the college program.

Section	Subject	Sample Text
<b>Pro-social Goals</b>		
Life Project	Intervention	But another thing that has just recently come up for me that I'm feeling increasingly passionate about and will take, have begun to take on as a project, is bringing about greater awareness, meaning locally, nationally, and maybe internationally on the-- what I'm calling the emotional and psychological or internal reentry process. When people think about reentry they think about people coming home from prison, getting a job, housing, family--all those are important pillars, there is no question. But they don't think about what's going on psychologically. I did 25 years...it's a process. And I'm, you know, I consider myself, you know, having my mental faculties together, I consider myself very fortunate that I have a wife and live in [a nice neighborhood], I mean, in other words I didn't have to struggle externally. Internally has been a process. And people don't deal with PTSD related to incarceration. It's as if you can go through decades of incarceration then come out and just get a job and you're fine. That is--something is wrong with that. So I want to shed light on that.
Chapters	Control	And I loved what I did, I mean, I feel like for the Teen Program I gave back because I was able to share my experiences and things that they are going through that I can relate to. And pretty much that was my outlet, like, you know, helping them try to go through whatever, you know, peer pressure or whatever, at their age..made me feel good about myself as well.
<b>Contamination Sequences</b>		
Chapters	Intervention	And uh, enter the 4th stage of my life, um, I ended up meeting the man that I wanted to marry. I fell in love with, you know, he was our mechanic and um, you know, we married and at first, though I didn't see it there were horrible um, he had a side of him that was abusive and um, you know, when you're in love, love is blind, and you don't look at this and you know, we got married the violence escalated, and ultimately I ended up killing him and I wound up in prison for 23 years
Chapters	Control	I had a girlfriend, age 15, we were both 15, same age. And at age 16 she became pregnant. So we were both going to school, she became pregnant, and that's where adolescence for me stopped.

## **Quantitative Measures**

### **Resilience.**

Resilience refers to a person's ability to weather life's storms – both the inevitable ups and downs of daily existence as well as more significant setbacks – in an adaptive way. Given the many trials of reentry after more than a decade in prison, resilience is surely a desirable quality for the population of interest in this project. A recent review of the psychometric properties of resilience scales (Windle, Bennett, & Noyes, 2011) found that, while there was no clear “gold standard,” the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-25 (CD-25) (Connor & Davidson, 2003) was among the three scales with the best psychometric properties (the other two were the Resilience Scale for Adults and the Brief Resilience Scale). The CD-RISC-25 was chosen for its good psychometric properties and availability in English.

The CD-RISC-25 is a 25-item self-report measure in which subjects respond to prompts asking about feeling states over the past month on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not true at all) to 4 (true nearly all the time). Sample items include general assessments of resilience such as “I am able to adapt when changes occur” as well as questions about more specific resilient coping strategies such as “I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems” or “During times of stress/crisis, I know where to turn for help.” All survey items are listed in the Appendix. Scores are summed, with total scores ranging from 0 to 100. Per the scoring manual (Davidson and Connor, 2016), the average score in a community population was 80.4 if only complete questionnaires were included and 79.0 if all questionnaires were included. In this sample the measure was found to be highly reliable (25 items;  $\alpha = .89$ ).

### **Compassion for self and compassion for others.**

Neff (2003) proposes that the concept of self compassion be used to avoid some of the complexities related to the concept of self-esteem, which has been shown to be related to positive as well as negative outcomes. “Self-compassion... involves being touched by and open to one’s own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one’s suffering and to heal oneself with kindness” (p. 87). Neff’s measure of self-compassion consists of three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-kindness refers to treating oneself in a kind and forgiving way rather than in a highly exacting manner. Common humanity is the recognition that one is part of a human community and that, as a result, one’s experiences – good and bad – can be understood as common human experiences. Mindfulness refers to the ability to engage in strategies of emotion regulation in regard to painful experiences. The measure has 26 items composed from these three subscales. Respondents answer on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost Always). Sample items include “I try to be loving towards myself when I experience emotional pain” and “When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.” In this sample the 26-item scale evidenced a Cronbach’s alpha value of .92, indicating good internal reliability.

The compassion for others scale (Pommier, 2011) was developed by a student of Neff and is based on similar logic as is the compassion for self scale. There are 24 items that again are composed of the same 3 subscales; the difference is that these items capture feelings towards others. Example items include, “When people cry in front of me, I often don’t feel anything at all” or “I pay careful attention when other people talk to me.” Respondents again answer on a 5-

point Likert scale. The 24-item scale had a Cronbach's alpha value of .85, again indicating good internal consistency.

### **Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS).**

Drawing on Erikson's insight that generativity is one of the primary developmental tasks of middle adulthood, McAdams and Guo (2015) define generativity as "an adult's concern for and commitment to promoting the growth and well-being of future generations through parenting, teaching, mentoring, institutional involvement, and a range of other social behaviors" (p.475). In other words, generativity refers to one's belief that one can and will offer meaningful contributions to the future. In this study generativity is measured by the 20-item self-report measure the Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams & de st. Aubin, 1992). On a 4-point Likert scale, respondents react to such prompts as "I have made and created things that have had an impact on other people" and "I have important skills that I try to teach others." Answer choices range from "0" – statement never applies to you – to "3" – statements apply to you very often or nearly always. Cronbach alpha for this scale (20-items) was .77, which surpassed the generally accepted threshold of .7 for internal reliability.

### **New General Self Efficacy Scale (NGSE).**

Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001) proposed their New General Self Efficacy Scale as an alternative to the Scherer et al. General Self-Efficacy Scale, which had been criticized for relatively low content validity. Their eight-item scale, used here, taps into self efficacy as a general trait indicating the expectation that one can perform effectively in a range of domains. General self efficacy is distinct from, though predictive of, specific self efficacy (SSE) for particular work tasks. Sample items include "When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them" and "I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks."

Subjects respond a 5-point Likert scale with answers ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Internal consistency was high (8 items;  $\alpha=.84$ ).

### **Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP).**

The Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP) attempts to measure individual disposition to experiences of guilt and shame as well as to two associated behavioral strategies: repair and withdraw (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Isko, 2011). Participants are asked to imagine themselves in specific situations in which they do something “wrong” that is either secretly or public known. For instance, they may be asked to imagine that they kept too much change from the cashier, without anyone noticing, or that they got publicly chastised by their boss for making a mistake on an important project. They are asked questions both about the likelihood that they would feel a certain way – uncomfortable or incompetent, for instance – in such situations and about the likelihood that they would behave in a certain way – such as trying harder next time or avoiding the chastising party. From these questions, 4 subscale scores are constructed. These include two scales indicating negative behavioral evaluation (Guilt-NBE) of privately-known guilt or publicly-known shame (Shame-Negative Self Evaluation) and two indicating propensity towards repair (Guilt-Repair) or withdrawal (Shame-withdrawal), respectively. Scoring instructions advise that researchers should not combine the four subscales but instead include them separately in analysis. Only the Guilt-NBE exceeded the .7 threshold for internal reliability in this sample (4 items;  $\alpha = .78$ ). Cronbach alpha for Guilt-repair was .62 (4 items) and for Shame-NSE .64 (4 items). Reliability for Shame-Withdrawal was very poor at .26 (4 items). For this reason the Shame-Withdrawal scale will be interpreted with extreme caution.

### **Demographic questionnaire.**

In addition to the six quantitative instruments discussed above, subjects were also instructed to complete a questionnaire that asked about their demographic identities including age, race/ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Subjects were also asked about their work and educational backgrounds, the educational background of their parents, and about their general mental health, substance abuse, and incarceration histories. The full-text of the questionnaire is listed in Appendix F.

### **Quantitative Operational Hypotheses**

Given the above measures of the variables of interest, the following hypotheses were formulated.

**Hypothesis One:** Participants of the Coming to Terms Curriculum [hereafter participants] will demonstrate greater average Compassion for Self scores than will comparable non-participants.

**Hypothesis Two:** Participants will demonstrate greater average Compassion for Other scores than will comparable non-participants.

**Hypothesis Three:** Participants will demonstrate higher average CD-RISC-25 scores than will non-participants.

**Hypothesis Four:** Program Participants will demonstrate greater generativity (LGS) scores than will non-participants.

**Hypothesis Five:** Program Participants will demonstrate greater self-efficacy (NGSE) scores than will non-participants.

**Hypothesis Six:** Program Participants will endorse higher Guilt-Negative Behavioral Evaluation and higher Guilt-Repair scores than will non-participants.

**Hypothesis Seven:** Program participants will endorse lower Shame-negative behavioral evaluation and lower shame-withdrawal scores than will non-participants.

**Hypothesis Eight:** For both participants and non-participants, Compassion for Self and Compassion for Other scores will be positively correlated.

**Hypothesis Nine:** Generativity (LGS) and self-efficacy (NGSE) scores will be positively correlated with resilience for both program participants and non-participants.

**Hypothesis Ten:** Program participants will demonstrate significantly more redemptive themes (Early Advantage, Suffering of Others, Moral Steadfastness, Redemptive Sequences, and Pro-social Goals) and significantly fewer contamination themes in the Life Story Interview when compared to non-participants.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

In addition to the analysis of the quantitative instruments and the systematic coding of the narrative interviews according to the McAdams' protocol, a more exploratory qualitative analysis was also conducted to take full advantage of the rich narrative data available. The primary purpose of this section was to examine in more detail narrative themes that may have been obscured in the quantitative thematic analysis given the small sample size. This qualitative analysis involved strategic selection of four cases for in-depth study using subjects' scores on the quantitative indicators as selection criteria. With strategic case selection, cases are not chosen for representativeness but rather because they are "information-rich" and thus make more efficient use of limited resources (Palinkas et al, 2011). In extreme case selection – sometimes called atypical or deviant case selection – cases are selected for investigation precisely because they are outliers on some outcome of interest (Patton 1990, p. 169 -70). The purpose is not, of

course, to generalize from these outliers, but rather to make inferences about factors that may distinguish cases performing particularly well on the outcomes of interest from those performing at the bottom of the distribution. Meaningful variables may be easier to identify when widely diverging cases are compared side by side. In this study, the narratives of four cases were described in detail. Two of these cases concerned subjects demonstrating resilience, generativity, and self-efficacy scores at the top of the distribution, while two focused on subjects scoring at the bottom of the distribution.

This analysis sought to supplement the quantitative thematic analysis with a more in-depth qualitative analysis. The themes of redemption, contamination, and moral steadfastness were probed, as were both the subject's understanding of himself/herself in relation to his/her crime and his/her expectations about the future. Recall that redemption and contamination narratives are near opposites, with redemptive narratives expected to be more adaptive than contamination narratives. The following prediction was made.

**Qualitative Hypothesis One:** More adaptive cases will demonstrate more redemption sequences relative to the number of contamination sequences than will less adaptive cases.

In addition to this hypothesis about relative frequency of redemption and contamination sequences, predictions were made about the specific patterns of redemption and contamination sequences that would be observed in more adaptive versus less adaptive cases.

**Qualitative Hypothesis Two:** More adaptive cases will rarely demonstrate contamination and redemptive sequences in the same scene; when they do, contamination will turn to redemption rather than vice versa. For those cases indicating lower levels of resilience, generativity, and self-efficacy, contamination and redemption sequences will more often be present in the same scene, with redemption turning into and ending in contamination.

In addition to examination of the narrative themes, careful attention was paid to the subject's description of the self in relation to familial or societal context in the course of their life narrative. Given the centrality of positive self-concept in the work of Maruna as well as of Armour and Sliva, the following prediction was made.

**Qualitative Hypothesis Three:** Cases indicating more adaptive functioning will demonstrate the ability to articulate a good view of self and demonstrate compassionate awareness of the role of difficult environmental factors in their life narratives, while cases indicating less adaptive functioning will tend to locate goodness outside the self and badness within the self.

Given the rare nature of the rich data available here, the researcher also read the narratives with an eye for any additional relevant themes that might warrant more systematic investigation. As will be discussed in the next session, one theme of this nature did emerge: the centrality of educational programming in subjects' narrative of their own personal growth. In order to further assess if researcher's impression of the salience of this variable was supported by the evidence, all twenty life story narratives were scored for the presence of spontaneous identification of the importance of in-prison education in one of the following scenes: Life Chapters, High Point, Turning Point, or Vivid Adult Memory.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

#### Demographic Characteristics

The sample interviewed consisted of twenty formerly incarcerated people residing in the greater New York City area. Table 2 displays selected sample demographics. The sample was demographically diverse while mirroring the disproportionate representation of persons of color in the American prison population. Of the twenty subjects, 35% identified as black, 30% as non-black Hispanics, 10% as white, and 20% as multi-racial or multi-ethnic.<sup>9</sup> Two subjects were born in Puerto Rico; all others were born in the continental United States. All subjects rated their English reading and speaking proficiency as very good, which was consistent with interviewer observation.

Participant ages ranged from 38 to 68, with a mean of 49.20 (SD 8.08). 55% of subjects were ascribed the sex of female at birth, while 45% were ascribed that of male. Of those subjects assigned the sex of female at birth, one (5%) chose not to disclose a gender identity. All other subjects endorsed a gender identity consistent with their sex assigned at birth, i.e. identified as cisgender. 15% of the sample described themselves as gay or bisexual/pansexual, while 85% described themselves as heterosexual.

The majority of the sample (65%) identified as Protestant, while 15% identified as Catholic, 10% as Muslim, and 10% as other religious identities. 40% of the sample reported attending religious services either sometimes (15%) or often (25%). 25% of the sample described their religion as “somewhat important,” while 70% described it as “very important.”

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<sup>9</sup> See Table 2 for the specific identities endorsed by multi-racial or multi-ethnic research subjects. Note that one subject chose not to endorse any racial or ethnic identification.

Table 2

*Sample Demographics*

Variable	N	Percent of Sample
Age		
35 - 44	7	35%
45 - 54	7	35%
55 - 64	5	25%
65 - 74	1	5%
Race and Ethnicity		
Black (No ethnicity endorsed)	7	35%
Non-Black Hispanic	6	30%
White (No ethnicity endorsed)	2	10%
White/Black/Hispanic	2	10%
Black/Hispanic	1	5%
Black/American Indian/Hawaiian Pacific Islander	1	5%
Prefer not to Answer	1	5%
Gender Identification		
Male	9	45%
Female	10	50%
Prefer not to Answer	1	5%
Highest Education Level		
High School/GED	4	20%
Associate's Degree	8	40%
Bachelor's Degree	7	35%
Master's Degree	1	5%
Employment Status		
Unemployed	6	30%
Employed Part-Time	6	30%
Employed Full-Time	8	40%
Religious Affiliation		
Protestant	13	65%
Catholic	3	15%
Muslim	2	10%
Mormon	1	5%
Jehovah's Witness	1	5%

30% of the sample was unemployed at the time of interview. 30% was employed part-time, and 40% was employed full-time. The median educational level was an Associate's Degree. All participants had earned at least a high school degree or GED, 40% had earned an Associate's, 35% had earned a Bachelor's Degree, and 5% had earned a Graduate degree (Master's). 65% of the sample were receiving some form of governmental financial assistance at the time of the interview, most commonly Medicaid, SNAP (assistance to purchase food), and cash assistance.

Table 3 reports subjects' self-reported mental health and substance abuse histories. 40% of the sample reported receiving a mental health diagnosis at some point in their lives. Most commonly endorsed diagnoses included depression (15% of the sample), anxiety (15%), and PTSD (10%). 35% reported receiving a diagnosis of substance abuse at some point in their lives, and an additional 30% reported feeling that they had a problem with a substance or substances at some point in their lives. Most commonly abused substances were marijuana (40%), crack/cocaine (25%) alcohol (15%), and heroin (15%).

Table 4 reports subjects' incarceration histories. Subjects' total time served in a state prison ranged from ten to thirty-three years, with a mean time served of twenty-one years (SD 6.30). Amount of time since release ranged from slightly less than one year (.75 years) to eleven years, with a mean of slightly over three years (SD 3.16).<sup>10</sup> 75% of the sample, was convicted of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder, a class A-1 felony in New York State, 20% was convicted of class B or C felonies such as Assault or Robbery in the 1<sup>st</sup> degree, and 5% percent was convicted of a number

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<sup>10</sup> This relatively wide range was driven by the range of the intervention groups themselves. Several male intervention subjects secured release very recently, so their inclusion necessitated selection of recently released control participants.

Table 3

*Sample Mental Health and Substance Abuse Histories*

Variable	N	Percent of Sample
Presence of Mental Health Diagnosis, Lifetime		
No Diagnosis	12	60%
Diagnosis	8	40%
Mental Health Diagnoses Endorsed		
Depression	3	15%
Anxiety	3	15%
PTSD	2	10%
Bipolar Disorder	1	5%
Anorexia	1	5%
Intermittent Explosive Disorder	1	5%
<i>Note: 3 subjects endorsed multiple diagnoses</i>		
Presence of Substance Abuse Diagnosis, Lifetime		
No Substance Problem	7	35%
Undiagnosed Substance Problem	6	30%
Substance Abuse Diagnosis	7	35%
Problematic Substances Endorsed		
Marijuana	8	40%
Crack/Cocaine	5	25%
Alcohol	3	15%
Heroin	3	15%
<i>Note: 6 subjects endorsed more than 1 substance</i>		

of class D and E felonies, such as criminal possession of a controlled substance or grand larceny, auto. 75% of the sample had sentences that included an upper limit of a life sentence, rendering uncertain whether they would ever secure release. A significant portion of the sample served sentences longer than their minimum sentence, while 30% served shorter sentences due to a legal statute that rewarded some prisoners with a parole hearing 6 months early. 60% of research subjects remained on parole at the time of the interview.

Table 4

*Sample Incarceration Histories*

Variable	Mean (years)	SD	Sample Minimum	Sample Maximum
Time Served	21.01	6.3	10	33
Time Since Release	3.23	3.16	0.75	11

Variable	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Parole/Probation Status		
Currently on parole	12	60%
No Longer on Parole	8	40%
Highest Convicted Crime		
Class A Felony	15	75%
Class B or C Felony	4	20%
Class D Felony	1	5%

**Assessing the Relationship between Treatment Condition and Demographic Variables**

In order to confirm the success of the attempt to match control participants to intervention participants on the variables of length of time served and length of time since release, as well as to identify systematic ways in which the control and intervention groups might be different a priori, chi square tests of independence and t-tests of independent groups were conducted, depending on the level of measurement of the variable in question.<sup>11</sup> Intervention subjects did not differ from control subjects in racial and ethnic identification as measured by a series of binary variables indicating White ( $\chi^2(1, N=19) = .13, p = .72$ ), Hispanic ( $\chi^2(1, N=19) = 2.77, p = .10$ ), or Black identity ( $\chi^2(1, N=19) = .35, p = .55$ ). Likewise, intervention subjects and control subjects

<sup>11</sup> Age, length of time served, length of time since release, and number of programs are ratio-level variables and can thus be assessed with t-tests, whereas other variables in this section necessitate a chi-square test of independent groups.

did not differ on length of time served,  $t(18) = .38$ ,  $p = .71$ , or length of time since release,  $t(18) = -1.04$ ,  $p = .31$ . Thus, there is evidence that matching was successful in creating control and intervention groups that were roughly equivalent on the selected variables. Additionally, there were no significant differences between the intervention group and the control in regard to age,<sup>12</sup> gender,<sup>13</sup> or sexual orientation.<sup>14</sup>

Intervention subjects were significantly different from control subjects on three dimensions: likelihood of receiving governmental benefits, past history of substance problem, and degree of program involvement while incarcerated, as expressed by the number of programs in which subjects reported participating. Intervention subjects were less likely than control subjects to report receiving governmental benefits of any type,  $\chi^2(1, N=20) = 4.43$ ,  $p = .04$ . 83.3% of controls reported receiving governmental benefits, compared to 37.5% of intervention subjects. Intervention subjects were also less likely than control subjects to endorse a substance problem over their lifetime,  $\chi^2(1, N = 20) = 4.43$ ,  $p = .04$ .<sup>15</sup> 83% of control subjects endorsed a substance abuse history, while only 37.5% of intervention subjects did so.<sup>16</sup> Finally, intervention participants on average participated in a higher number of supplemental programs while incarcerated ( $M = 7$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) than did control subjects ( $M = 5.08$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ),  $t(18) = 2.60$ ,  $p = .02$ . Interpretation of these differences across treatment condition will be considered in the discussion section below.

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<sup>12</sup>  $T(18) = .75$ ,  $p = .46$ .

<sup>13</sup>  $\chi^2(1, N=20) = .30$ ,  $p = .58$ .

<sup>14</sup>  $\chi^2(1, N=20) = 2.35$ ,  $p = .13$ .

<sup>15</sup> Note that the  $\chi^2$  value reported here is identical to the value reported above for the variable receipt of governmental benefits. The numbers have been double-checked and are correct. Though the specific scores for each variable are not identical for all subjects, the cross-tabs against the variable of treatment condition are identical.

<sup>16</sup> Note that the reasons for the differential prevalence of substance abuse history across treatment condition are unclear, as there was no program exclusion for substance history. It is possible that substance abuse history correlated negatively with the factors that made it more likely for an inmate to self-select into the program.

For the demographic variables of race, gender, and sexual orientation, a series of chi square analyses was conducted to identify any significant patterns in these variables' relationships to other measured demographic variables. Subjects identifying as black reported higher levels of paternal education compared to other subjects,  $\chi^2(3, N=16) = 10.33, p = .02$ . In contrast, subjects identifying as Hispanic reported lower levels of paternal education compared to other subjects,  $\chi^2(3, N = 16) = 13.33, p = .00$ . Those identifying as Hispanic also endorsed lower levels of employment compared to other subjects,  $\chi^2(2, N = 19) = 12.45, p = .002$ .

In this sample, those endorsing gay or bisexual identity were more likely than were other subjects to have had a substance abuse or mental illness diagnosis over the course of their lifetime,  $\chi^2(1, N = 20), = 6.56, p = .01$  and  $\chi^2(1, N=20) = 5.29, p = .02$ , respectively. They also reported less employment than did those with heterosexual identities,  $\chi^2(2, N=20) = 8.24, p = .02$ . There was a significant difference between female-identifying subjects and male-identifying subjects in self-report of problematic substance use across their lifespan,  $\chi^2(1, N=20) = 4.11, p = .04$ . Female subjects were less likely than were their male peers to endorse lifetime substance problem. There was also a statistically significant relationship between gender and time elapsed since release,  $t(18) = 2.66, p = .02$ . Women had been out of prison for a longer amount of time on average ( $M = 4.70, SD = 3.62$ ) than had male subjects ( $M = 1.42, SD = .75$ ).

### **Findings, Quantitative Instruments**

This section reports the quantitative inferential results for the first set of research hypotheses. Recall that the researcher predicted that the intervention subjects would demonstrate significantly different scores from the control subjects on a number of indicators of psychological adaptation. Descriptive statistics for these quantitative instruments are displayed

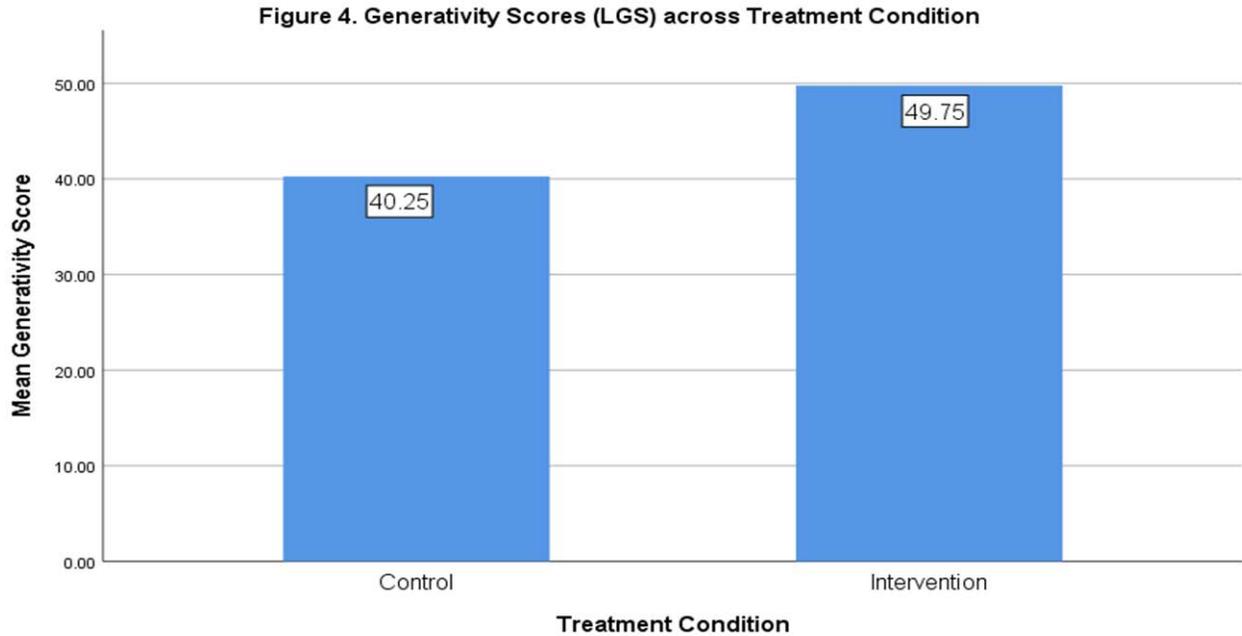
in Table 5. The sample demonstrated high levels of compassion for others and slightly lower levels of self compassion. The mean resilience score of 78.2 was just slightly below the mean of 80.4 found in a community population (Davidson & Connor, 2016). With a total possible self efficacy score of 40, the mean of 34.15 indicates fairly high levels of self efficacy in the sample. Compared to the other outcomes measures, however, mean generativity – 44.05 - was lower relative to the maximum possible score of 60. For the guilt and shame subscales the sample endorsed relatively high levels of guilt-repair orientation and slightly lower guilt-Negative Behavioral Evaluation scores. Measures of Shame-Negative Self Evaluation and Shame-Withdraw were fairly low in the sample, especially in comparison to the guilt measures.

Table 5.  
*Descriptive Statistics for Quantitative Study Instruments*

Variable	Statistics					
	Mean	SD	Min (Sample)	Max (Sample)	Min	Max
Self Compassion	3.73	0.77	1.98	4.78	1.0	5.0
Compassion for Others	4.38	0.41	3.58	5.0	1.0	5.0
Resilience	78.2	12.03	50.0	94.0	0.0	100.0
Generativity	44.05	8.18	29.0	55.0	0.0	60.0
Self Efficacy	34.15	3.51	29.0	40.0	8.0	40.0
Guilt-Negative Evaluation	5.25	1.62	1.0	7.0	1.0	7.0
Guilt-Repair	6.19	0.79	4.0	7.0	1.0	7.0
Shame-Negative Evaluation	3.78	1.38	1.5	7.0	1.0	7.0
Shame-Withdraw	2.25	0.88	1.0	4.25	1.0	7.0

In order to test study hypotheses, a series of t-tests and, when appropriate, chi square tests of independent groups was conducted. Recall that Hypotheses One through Three predicted that intervention subjects would demonstrate greater levels of self compassion, compassion for others, and resilience than would control subjects. None of these hypotheses were fully supported by the data. For the variable of self compassion, there was no statistically significant difference across groups,  $t(18) = .05$ ,  $p = .96$ . Though the variable of compassion for others also did not reach statistical significance, the relatively small p value warrants attention,  $t(18) = 1.46$ ,  $p = .16$ . In this case, the mean compassion for others score of the intervention group ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = .37$ ) was greater than the mean score of the control group ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = .41$ ). This mean difference of about one quarter of a point on a 4-point scale was in the direction predicted by the hypothesis. Similar results were found for the variable of resilience,  $t(18) = 1.51$ ,  $p = .15$ . Again the difference between groups was in the direction predicted by the hypothesis, with the intervention group evidencing somewhat higher levels of resilience on the CD-RISC ( $M = 83$ ,  $SD = 8.52$ ) than did the control group ( $M = 75$ ,  $SD = 13.26$ ).

Hypothesis Four predicted that intervention subjects would endorse higher levels of generativity on the Loyola Generativity Scale than would control participants. This hypothesis was supported by the data,  $t(18) = 3.05$ ,  $p = .007$ . Figure 4 presents a graphic depiction of this difference. Out of a total possible score of 60, intervention subjects had an average score of 49.75 ( $SD = 4.83$ ), compared to an average of 40.25 ( $SD = 7.83$ ) for the control group. Thus, the null hypothesis that the two groups demonstrate equivalent generativity scores is rejected.



Hypothesis Five predicted that intervention subjects would demonstrate greater levels of self-efficacy – as measured by the New General Self-Efficacy Scale – than would control subjects. This hypothesis was rejected,  $t(18) = 1.15$ ,  $p = .26$ . On a scale with a possible maximum of 40, intervention participants demonstrated slightly higher levels of self-efficacy ( $M = 35.25$ ,  $p = 3.15$ ) than did control participants ( $M = 33.42$ ,  $p = 3.68$ ).

Hypotheses Six and Seven made predictions in regard to subjects' endorsement of guilt and shame-proneness. Hypothesis Six suggested that intervention subjects would endorse higher levels of Guilt-Negative Behavioral Evaluation and higher Guilt-Repair scores than would control subjects. This hypothesis was not supported by the data,  $t(18) = 1.29$ ,  $p = .21$  for Guilt-NBE and  $t(18) = 1.18$ ,  $p = .26$  for Guilt-Repair. For the latter, the assumption of equal variances was rejected,  $F = 6.00$ ,  $p = .03$ . Though differences across groups were not statistically significant, they were in the predicted direction. Out of a possible score of 7, intervention

subjects evidenced a mean Guilt-NBE score of 5.82 (SD = 1.03), while control subjects demonstrated a mean score of 4.88 (SD = 1.86). Intervention participants also demonstrated slightly higher Guilt-Repair scores (M = 6.41, SD = .40) when compared to the scores of control participants (M = 6.04, SD = .95). Hypothesis Seven predicted that intervention subjects would endorse lower Shame-Negative Self Evaluation scores and lower Shame-Withdrawal scores than would control subjects. Again, this hypothesis was not supported,  $t(18) = 1.47$ ,  $p = .16$  for Shame-NBE and  $t(18) = .17$ ,  $p = .53$  for Shame-Withdrawal. In this case, mean differences were not in the predicted direction. As was the case with the guilt subscale measures, intervention participants demonstrated higher Shame-NBE (M = 4.31, SD = 1.62) and Shame-Withdrawal (M = 2.41, SD = .86) scores than did the control participants (Shame-NBE: M = 3.42, SD = 1.12; Shame-Withdrawal: M = 2.15, SD = .91). While these differences were not statistically significant, their direction contra prediction may indicate need to reevaluate hypotheses about the relationship between guilt and shame in the population under study. However, given that the shame subscales demonstrated poor internal consistency scores, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

In addition to predicting that the intervention group would endorse higher scores on a number of measures of positive psychological adaptation, the study also predicted a particular set of relationships among variables in the sample. Table 6 displays the correlational matrix for the quantitative instruments.

Table 6

*Quantitative Instruments' Correlational Matrix*

Variable	Self Compassion	Compassion for Others	Resilience	Generativity	Self Efficacy	Guilt-Negative Evaluation	Guilt-Repair	Shame-Negative Evaluation	Shame- Withdraw
Self Compassion	–								
Compassion for Others	.465*	–							
Resilience	.736**	.473*	–						
Generativity	-0.025	0.333	0.290	–					
Self Efficacy	0.137	.522*	.611**	0.387	–				
Guilt-Negative Evaluation	0.352	0.112	0.392	0.371	0.005	–			
Guilt-Repair	0.373	-0.003	0.260	-0.073	-0.110	.479*	–		
Shame-Negative Evaluation	-0.153	0.209	0.147	0.183	0.347	0.091	0.023	–	
Shame-Withdraw	-0.187	-0.237	-0.082	-0.144	0.060	-.581**	-.450*	0.172	–

\* p &lt; .05 \*\* p &lt; .01

Hypothesis Eight predicted that compassion for self and compassion for other would be positively correlated for both the intervention and control groups. This hypothesis was partially supported. When intervention and control groups were analyzed together, there was a modest positive correlation between compassion for self and compassion for other (Spearman's rho = .47, p = .04). However, when the groups were analyzed separately, results differed from prediction, though arguably in a direction more consistent with the intervention's efficacy. Table 7 displays the correlation matrix for the control group, while Table 8 presents the correlation matrix for the intervention group. When only intervention participants were considered, there was a very strong positive correlation between compassion for self and compassion for other (Spearman r = .810, p = .015). In contrast, when only control participants were included, there

was no statistically significant correlation between the two forms of compassion (Spearman  $r = .319$ ,  $p = .312$ ).

Table 7

*Correlational Matrix for Control Subjects (N = 12)*

Variable	Self Compassion	Compassion for Others	Resilience	Generativity	Self Efficacy	Guilt- Negative Evaluation	Guilt-Repair	Shame- Negative Evaluation	Shame- Withdraw
Self Compassion	–								
Compassion for Others	0.319	–							
Resilience	.800**	0.386	–						
Generativity	0.204	.610*	0.450	–					
Self Efficacy	0.182	0.535	.587*	0.416	–				
Guilt-Negative Evaluation	0.495	0.103	0.360	0.448	-0.054	–			
Guilt-Repair	.617*	0.143	0.320	0.005	-0.023	0.337	–		
Shame-Negative Evaluation	-0.267	-0.037	0.173	0.260	0.568	-0.030	-0.266	–	
Shame-Withdraw	-0.186	-.608*	-0.083	-0.415	-0.061	-0.510	-0.406	0.196	–

\* p &lt; .05 \*\* p &lt; .01

Table 8

*Correlation Matrix for Intervention Subjects (N = 8)*

Variable	Self Compassion	Compassion for Others	Resilience	Generativity	Self Efficacy	Guilt- Negative Evaluation	Guilt-Repair	Shame- Negative Evaluation	Shame- Withdraw
Self Compassion	–								
Compassion for Others	.810*	–							
Resilience	.766*	0.575	–						
Generativity	-0.262	-0.357	-0.204	–					
Self Efficacy	0.398	0.518	0.648	0.024	–				
Guilt-Negative Evaluation	0.036	-0.036	0.127	0.024	-0.152	–			
Guilt-Repair	-0.192	-0.166	0.013	-0.319	-0.297	0.666	–		
Shame-Negative Evaluation	-0.095	0.190	-0.072	-0.143	-0.301	0.036	0.485	–	
Shame-Withdraw	-0.037	0.209	-0.136	0.025	0.367	-.926**	-0.658	-0.012	–

\* p &lt; .05 \*\* p &lt; .01

Hypothesis Nine predicted that resilience would be positively correlated with compassion for self, compassion for others, generativity, and self efficacy. This hypothesis was partially supported. There was a strong positive correlation between resilience and self compassion (Spearman's  $r = .736$ ,  $p = .000$ ), as well as between resilience and self efficacy (Spearman's  $r = .611$ ,  $p = .004$ ). There was a moderate positive correlation between resilience and compassion for others (Spearman's  $r = .47$ ,  $p = .04$ ). However, there was not a statistically significant correlation between generativity and resilience (Spearman's  $r = .29$ ,  $p = .22$ ).

The guilt and shame sub-scores did not demonstrate statistically significant relationships to any other outcome variables, though there were some significant correlations across subscales. Guilt-Negative Behavioral Evaluation (NBE) was positively correlated to Guilt-Repair (Spearman =  $.479$ ,  $\alpha = .033$ ) and negatively correlated to Shame-Withdrawal (Spearman =  $-.581$ ,  $\alpha = .007$ ). In other words, those subjects who perceived certain behaviors as likely to induce feelings of guilt were more likely to take actions to repair harm in the future and less likely to withdraw from feelings of diffuse personal inadequacy. Shame-Withdrawal was also negatively correlated to Guilt-Repair (Spearman =  $-.450$ ,  $\alpha = .047$ ). Guilt-NBE did approach a statistically significant relationship to resilience (Spearman =  $.392$ ,  $\alpha = .087$ ).

Because of the phenomenon observed above of differential relationships between variables in the intervention group when compared to the control group, the correlational matrix was also examined for each treatment condition separately, as displayed above in Tables 7 and 8. Though not predicted by study hypotheses, once groups were separated in this way, guilt and shame sub-scales did assume significant relationships to other variables, though in discrete ways for each group. For the control group, there was a strong negative correlation between Shame-

Withdrawal<sup>17</sup> – the tendency to withdraw one’s self from situations that evoke shame – and Compassion for Others (Spearman’s  $r = -.61$ ,  $p = .04$ ). For this group there was also a strong positive correlation between Self Compassion and Guilt-Repair (Spearman  $r = .62$ ,  $p = .03$ ). In contrast, for the intervention group, there was a very strong negative correlation between Shame-Withdrawal and Guilt-Negative Behavioral Evaluation, (Spearman  $r = -.93$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

While not directly related to study hypotheses, there were several statistically significant relationships between demographic variables and quantitative instruments. There was a statistically significant difference in mean resilience score between heterosexual and gay/bisexual-identifying subjects,  $t(18) = 2.43$ ,  $p = .03$ . Gay/bisexual-identifying subjects reported lower resilience scores ( $M = 64.33$ ,  $SD = 8.50$ ) than did heterosexual-identifying subjects ( $M = 80.65$ ,  $SD = 10.97$ ). While not statistically significant, the differences in means between Hispanic and non-Hispanic subjects approached statistical significance,  $t(17) = 2.065$ ,  $p = .056$ , with Hispanic subjects demonstrating lower resilience scores. Those with a lifetime history of substance abuse diagnosis displayed lower levels of resilience,  $t(18) = 2.60$ ,  $p = .02$ , and generativity,  $t(18) = 3.38$ ,  $p = .003$ , compared to those without a diagnosis.

### **Results, Thematic Coding**

In addition to the hypotheses about the quantitative instruments, the study also made predictions about the relationship between treatment condition and the narrative coding themes. Descriptive statistics for the mean coding decisions are displayed in Table 9. For all themes the minimum possible score was 0, and the maximum was 12. Themes of redemption and contamination were much more prevalent in the data, with means of 6.25 and 4.80, respectively,

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<sup>17</sup> Recall, however, that this subscale had very poor internal reliability, so this finding should be interpreted cautiously.

than were the relatively rare themes of Early Advantage (1.2) and Sensitivity to the Suffering of Others (1.975). Contamination displayed the largest total range among the coded themes and Early Advantage the smallest.

Table 9  
*Descriptive Statistics, Narrative Coding Themes*

Coding Theme	Statistics			
	Mean	SD	Min (Sample)	Max (Sample)
Early Advantage	1.20	0.88	0.00	3.50
Suffering of Others	1.98	1.56	0.00	5.00
Moral Steadfastness	3.18	1.49	0.00	6.00
Redemption	6.25	1.87	2.50	9.00
Prosocial	2.23	1.94	0.00	7.00
Contamination	4.80	2.06	0.00	9.00

Hypothesis Ten predicted that intervention subjects would demonstrate greater frequency of the five “redemptive life narrative” coding themes – early advantage, moral steadfastness, sensitivity to the suffering of others, redemptive sequences, and prosocial goals – and lower frequency of contamination sequences than would control subjects. This hypothesis was not all supported in the data, as there was consistently no difference in the mean thematic frequencies found in intervention subjects narratives when compared to those of control subjects for any of the six themes evaluated. Results of the relevant t-tests are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10  
*Results of T-tests and Descriptive Statistics for Narrative Themes by Treatment Condition*

Narrative Theme	Group						95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
	Control			Intervention					
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N			
Early Advantage	1.13	0.86	12	1.31	0.96	8	-1.05, 0.67	-0.46	18
Suffering of Others	1.67	1.66	12	2.44	1.37	8	-2.26, 0.72	-1.09	18
Moral Steadfastness	2.79	1.57	12	3.75	1.57	8	-2.35, 0.43	-1.45	18
Redemptive Sequence	6.42	2.00	12	6.00	1.77	8	-1.42, 2.25	0.48	18
Prosocial Goals	2.08	2.42	12	2.44	0.98	8	-2.26, 1.55	-0.45	15.59
Contamination	4.83	2.53	12	4.75	1.20	8	-1.95, 2.11	0.86	18

Given, as discussed in the preceding chapter, the less than desirable inter-rater reliability for the thematic coding, t-tests were also conducted with three different versions of the thematic coding as a robustness check. When either Rater 1's exclusive coding decisions or Rater 2's were used in lieu of the mean variable that had been a composite of their decisions, there was no change in the pattern of results, none of which were statistically significant. When, however, the "generous" version of the measure was employed, in which a theme was coded as present if either of the two coders identified as such, the moral steadfastness theme approached statistical significance,  $t(18) = 1.80$ ,  $p = .09$ . For the control group, mean moral steadfastness score was 3.42 (SD = 2.2), while the mean score for the intervention group was 5.00 (SD = 1.41). In this version of the coding, while still not statistically significant, early advantage and suffering of others also had relatively low p-values,  $t(18) = 1.52$ ,  $p = .15$ , and  $t(18) = 1.56$ ,  $p = .14$ , respectively. Thus, there was evidence that the results were sensitive to different versions of the coding and that, with the most "generous" version of the coding, results for several themes began to approach statistical significance.

Further, a number of the themes were positively correlated with each other. The correlational matrix for narrative themes is displayed in Table 11. Moral steadfastness evidenced a modest positive correlation to Prosocial Goals (Spearman = .57,  $p = .01$ ), which was itself strongly correlated to Redemption themes (Spearman = .72,  $p = .000$ ). Only one of the narrative themes evidenced statistically significant relationships to the quantitative instruments reviewed above. Moral steadfast was strongly related to both generativity (Spearman = .66,  $p = .002$ ) and Compassion for Others (Spearman = .68,  $p = .001$ ). Prosocial goals approached a statistically significant relationship to generativity (Spearman = .38,  $p = .097$ ). Contamination themes were

Table 11

*Correlational Matrix, Narrative Themes and Quantitative Instruments*

Variable	Early Advantage	Suffering of Others	Moral Steadfastness	Redemption	Prosocial	Contamination	Self Compassion	Compassion for Others	Resilience	Generativity	Self Efficacy
Early Advantage	–										
Suffering of Others	0.361	–									
Moral Steadfastness	-0.036	0.175	–								
Redemption	0.186	-0.086	0.394	–							
Prosocial	-0.051	-0.091	.567**	.719**	–						
Contamination	0.071	-0.127	0.143	0.109	-0.048	–					
Self Compassion	0.320	0.205	0.190	0.140	-0.079	-0.425	–				
Compassion for Others	0.176	0.178	.675**	0.365	0.271	-0.011	.465*	–			
Resilience	0.022	0.261	0.299	-0.076	-0.040	-.487*	.736**	.473*	–		
Generativity	-0.038	0.346	.655**	0.123	0.382	-0.058	-0.025	0.333	0.290	–	
Self Efficacy	-0.290	0.141	0.403	-0.014	0.015	-0.029	0.137	.522*	.611**	0.387	–

\* p &lt; .05 \*\* p &lt; .01

not correlated to any of the five McAdams coding themes. They were, however, modestly negatively correlated with resilience (Spearman =  $-.49$ ,  $\alpha = .03$ ).

A series of t-tests were also conducted to assess possible relationships between narrative themes and demographic variables. There was a significant relationship between black identity and contamination themes in the sample,  $t(17) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .02$ , with those endorsing black identity displaying fewer contamination themes in their life narratives than did other subjects. In addition, the relationship between black identity and prevalence of early advantage themes approached statistical significance,  $t(17) = 1.79$ ,  $p = .09$ , with persons identifying as black endorsing more early advantage themes than did other persons. Persons describing their religion as “very important” demonstrated fewer contamination themes than did persons describing their religion as “not at all” or only “somewhat” important,  $t(18) = 2.82$ ,  $p = .01$ . Persons endorsing lifetime history of mental health diagnosis presented a higher number of contamination themes in their life narratives than did subjects without past diagnosis,  $t(18) = 3.31$ ,  $p = .004$ .

### **Qualitative Analysis**

In order to supplement the quantitative analysis and take advantage of the rich narrative data available, qualitative analysis of two types was conducted. First, taking advantage of the utility of qualitative analysis for highlighting features of both extreme and ideal-type cases, cases were selected at both the more adaptive and less adaptive extremes of the sample. In this qualitative analysis, attention was paid to content themes that may have been overlooked by the exclusive use of the McAdams redemptive themes scoring methodology to score the narratives. Additionally, in order to further probe the potential relevance of the McAdams themes, themes of

moral steadfastness, redemption, and contamination were examined in greater detail as they emerged (or did not) in the chosen narratives.

In addition to this in-depth examination of highly adaptive and less adaptive cases in the sample, a more inductive, exploratory analysis was conducted on the full universe of cases in order to identify potential hypotheses that might be tested systematically in future research. This was done to make full use of the rare data collected here – twenty formerly incarcerated persons, incarcerated for a sum total of four hundred and twenty years, describing in detail how they understand their lives. Of course, given the inductive procedure, the findings here are indeed preliminary and should be interpreted as such.

### **Analysis of Extreme Cases**

In order to select cases for more systematic qualitative investigation, the data set was sorted one variable at a time on the key variables of resilience, generativity, and self efficacy in order to permit the identification of more adaptive and less adaptive cases that might then be compared. . Resilience, generativity, and self efficacy were selected as the studied variables that most plausibly proxied for the subject’s perceived general functioning. . While compassion for self and compassion for other were meaningful variables themselves correlated with the three identified variables, they were viewed to be at best less direct routes to an assessment of relative functioning. As the guilt and shame subscales were correlated only with each other, they were not included in this analysis. Given this variable selection, “less adaptive” cases were deemed to be those that fell far below the mean sample values for each of these three measures, while “more adaptive” cases were those that fell far above the mean values. More adaptive cases were those that scored consistently higher than average on these three indicators, while less adaptive

cases were those that scored consistently lower. While some other cases may have had a lower score than the selected “less adaptive” cases on one of these instruments, they were not included because they had less consistently negative scores on the other two dimensions. The same logic applied for the “more adaptive” cases on the higher end of the measures. Table 12 displays resilience, generativity, and self-efficacy scores for the four cases selected by this procedure. Interestingly, both of the “less adaptive” cases were control cases, while both of the “more adaptive” cases were intervention cases. One male case and one female case was considered for both the “less adaptive” and “more adaptive” categories.

Lest the reader fear that the researcher “cherry picked” preferred cases, here I will briefly describe the other candidate cases for inclusion in this qualitative analysis. The control cases here were 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> in terms of resilience scores. The subject scoring 19<sup>th</sup> was also a control subject. Similarly, the selected control cases were tied for lowest generativity score; the next lowest case was also a control. In addition to the selected controls, 4 other subjects had low self efficacy scores; of these, three were control cases, and one was an intervention case. The one intervention case had much higher scores on resilience and generativity and so did not meet selection criteria. Of the more adaptive cases, while there was an occasionally a case that performed high on one of the selected variables, there were no other cases that were systematically very high on all three variables. One control case scored very high on self efficacy, but not high on the other variables; another control case similarly had a particularly high score for resilience that did not match on the other two variables.

Table 12

*Qualitative Case Selection*

Subject	Selection Criteria			Themes for Investigation		
	Resilience (M = 78)	Generativity (M = 44)	Efficacy (M = 34)	Redemption (M = 6.25)	Contamination (M = 4.8)	MoralSteadfastness (M = 3.18)
Control 1	50	29	31	9.0	9.0	2.0
Control 2	61	29	29	5.0	5.5	1.5
Intervention 1	92	53	39	4.0	3.0	4.0
Intervention 2	89	51	39	6.5	5.0	5.0

Less Adaptive

More Adaptive

It is important to clarify that this language of less and more adaptive is meant to be neither an absolute nor a characterological assessment. It is likely that variation in these scores is at least partly a temporally-contingent reflection of the variant psychosocial circumstances subjects faced at the time of the interview. Still, other things being equal, it is fair to say that those subjects at the low end of the measures are faring less well in their transitions than those at the higher end, and the analysis that follows is an attempt to learn something meaningful from this variance.

An additional qualification about the categories of “less adaptive” and “more adaptive” is warranted here. It is possible that the consistency on the low or high end displayed by selected cases is more the product of a certain response style (i.e. tendency to be very negative or very positive) than it is a reflection of meaningful differences in functioning. While it is not altogether possible to rule out this possibility, there is indication that the differences captured here are not the sole result of response bias. More specifically, the patterns of “less adaptive” and “more adaptive” for these subjects are not limited to self-report measures but are also reflected in questions about more “objective” experiences. For instance, both of the “less adaptive” cases are unemployed and receiving governmental benefits, while the “more adaptive” cases are employed full-time and are not receiving benefits. Similarly, both of the less adaptive cases report histories of mental health and substance abuse diagnoses. The mental health diagnoses are depression and anxiety, respectively; the abused substances are in one case heroin and crack cocaine and in the other marijuana and crack cocaine. In contrast, neither of the “more adaptive” cases report a mental health diagnosis and only one reports a past history of self-identified substance problem (but not substance abuse diagnosis), in this case with alcohol being the problematic substance. These discrepancies across cases provide an additional reminder that the qualitative analysis is

not designed to demonstrate the efficacy of the intervention – there are obviously too many confounding factors at play for this logic to hold. Rather, the intent is to investigate how narratives vary across lower functioning and higher functioning cases, so that the reader may learn more about adaptive self narrative.

While only resilience, generativity, and self efficacy were used to select cases, Table 12 also lists total subject scores for the themes of redemption, contamination, and moral steadfastness, as part of the rationale for this more in-depth analysis is to further investigate relationships that may or may not be present between these themes and other variables of interest. Moral steadfastness and contamination were chosen for special investigation because they were the only themes that proved to be related to the studied survey instruments to a statistically significant degree. Redemptive themes were chosen because of their theoretical appeal as the (hypothetically) more adaptive counter-parts of the contamination sequences. It was hoped that the qualitative analysis might help to shed light on whether redemptive themes warranted future study in this population as indicators of positive adaptive and resilience. Note that, consistent with the non-significant statistical results in the quantitative thematic analysis, it was not necessarily the case that less adaptive cases had fewer redemptive sequences and more contamination sequences than the more adaptive cases. However, the less adaptive cases did demonstrate fewer moral steadfastness themes than was average for the sample, while the more adaptive cases demonstrated more such themes than average in the sample.

Tables 13 – 16 display each subject’s authored “table of contents” as well as a content summary of the scenes they selected for each of the eight key scenes and the three future-oriented questions. Below I will consider each case in turn before attempting to derive some more general conclusions from comparative analysis. Recall that the qualitative hypotheses

concerned differential patterns of contamination and redemption sequences in more adaptive cases compared to less adaptive cases, as well as differences in subjects' understanding of themselves in relation to their crime. To investigate these hypotheses and the general thematic trends, the following elements will be highlighted in each narrative: how do subjects understand themselves in relation to their crime?; what are the patterns of redemption, contamination, and moral steadfastness themes in their narrative?; with what scenes do subjects evidence qualitative struggle? how do subjects envision the future ?

Table 13

*Interview Summary for Less Adaptive Case 1*

Table of Contents

1. Adolescence
2. Responsibility [young fatherhood]
3. Imprisonment
4. Freedom
5. Return [returning to prison]
6. The Struggle [transitioning out of prison for the second time]

High Point: [Difficulty identifying] Completing education while inside

Low Point: Battling Stage-4 Cancer while Incarcerated

Turning Point: Experience in a program that led him to discontinue illegal activities while inside

Positive Childhood Scene: Learning he would be a father, Committing to the role

Negative Childhood Scene: A very serious injury from a fall

Vivid Adult Memory: Coming up with a creative solution when facing a gang over a drug-related dispute while inside

Wisdom Scene: Coming up with a creative solution after a friend threatened him with violence while inside

Religious/Spiritual Scene: Becoming interested in meditation, learning about “Zen Catholicism”

Next Chapter: Contemplating his Career Ambitions; Previously Desire to become a CASAC, but now perhaps becoming truck driver

Future Hopes, Dreams, and Plans: Wish to be able to fund his own retirement in 15 years or so

Life Project: Reconciling with his daughter, grandchildren

### **Less Adaptive Case One: Enrique**

The subject who will be referred to here as Enrique is a man who served 25 years for a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder conviction and who later served an additional two years for a lesser charge of conspiracy. His scores were consistently among the lowest in the sample: 20<sup>th</sup> in Resilience, tied for 19<sup>th</sup> (with Less Adaptive Case Two) in Generativity, and tied with four other subjects for the second lowest Self Efficacy score. This pattern of scores indicated that, compared to his peers in the sample, Enrique was at the time of the interview struggling to cope with setbacks, invest productively in the future, and take confidence in his ability to accomplish his goals.

One of the striking characteristics of Enrique's narrative is the prevalence of both redemption sequences and contamination sequences - with 9 interview segments containing each sequence type, he had the highest number of scores for each sequence. This pattern is puzzling on its face, as redemption sequences and contamination sequences are conceived as thematic opposites. Understanding Enrique's frequent resort to both may draw some light on why redemption themes didn't prove to be statistically significant in this sample. Why does a subject endorsing such consistently less adaptive characteristics possess so many forms of a narrative sequence meant to be associated with positive functioning?

Before engaging this question, it is important to consider how Enrique understands his early involvement in drugs and, eventually, crime. Though he acknowledges adverse aspects of his early experience, he also emphasizes the benefits of his upbringing, stating: "Um, grew up poor in the South Bronx, though managed to live with - or be taught - proper morals, proper guidance. My mother was pretty strict." He conceives of his early involvement with drugs - marijuana initially - as "typical adolescent behavior." He offers no explanation for beginning to use heroin in his early '20s. Thus, though there is no clear narrative about why he found himself

using drugs at a young age, there is an attempt to emphasize the goodness of his upbringing, leaving him bearing the responsibility alone for his missteps.

A prominent feature of Enrique's narrative is conflict, struggle between constructive desires – to further his education, to be the dad that he never had, to be an upstanding guy while inside – and “darker” temptations – drugs, quick money, materialist routes to obtaining self esteem. His life story summary in response to the “Chapters” prompt is full of redemptive sequences that almost invariably turn into contamination sequences. The redemptive sequences are themselves striking. He responds, for instance, to two realities that might be considered objectively “negative” – growing up without a father and getting his teenage girlfriend pregnant when he himself was 16 – by attempting, and, for a time, succeeding, to be the responsible father that he never had. Enrique says:

Of course, I grew up without a father, and I didn't want my child to grow up without a father. So I dropped out of school, got a job, and by the time my daughter was born, our daughter was born, I was doing pretty good. 17, 18 years old, I had a stable job, I was making very good money you know - we had our own apartment. By the time I was 18 I had a vehicle. So it was like, I used to say that we were the envy of all the teenagers in our neighborhood... because here we were, young age, and we were doing well despite the fact that most teenagers who have a child, their life kind of like, goes wayward. But for me it was something that I enjoyed, being a responsible father, young father and young husband.

Yet, as happens so often in Enrique's life story, his attempts to craft something beautiful from something difficult go awry, in this case because of his drug use and eventual involvement in a murder. The immediate result is far from what he had desired for himself and his family: “24-years-old, high school dropout, left a young daughter, 7-years-old, and a young wife behind, abandoned them due to my crime. And I was sentenced to [more than 20] years to life for homicide.” In another, similar example, Enrique succeeds eventually in securing release from prison and obtaining a meaningful, good-paying job in a help-giving capacity, only to lose it

when accused of impropriety by a client and later to again become involved in criminal activity and return to prison. Interestingly, his account of his time inside also reflects conflict. Whereas most of the other subjects' incarceration narratives were more consistently focused on following the upright path, Enrique acknowledged having one foot in each world throughout much of his incarceration:

...but I will say that during that time, during that chapter of imprisonment, during my early part of my incarceration, I was into no good. I used to sell drugs in prison just to-- for the hustle... I would often say that I had one foot in the dark and one foot in the light. Because while I was hustling-- until about-- I would say-- when I started the.... [college program while inside]..., by then I had left the drug dealing alone - I was on a different course. But you know, I just needed to put in, during that time period, during the 23 years, there was a time period that I was not a good guy, quote-unquote. Most of the guys did think I was doing good because this is what they saw. But underneath those layers I was also doing negative things just to survive.

An additional indicator of conflict is how frequently Enrique displays contamination and redemption logics for the same scene. He does so for eight scenes, including several scenes that pull for positive memories. It is striking that contamination sequences even “pop up” when Enrique is asked to describe a high point or a positive childhood memory. There is only one scene in which Enrique displays a redemption logic unmarred by contamination but three scenes – strikingly, all future-oriented - in which there is contamination without the grace of a redemption sequence.

This is not to say that his narrative lacks evidence of his commitment to change. Whereas redemption often turns to contamination, contamination again gives way to redemption. And there are indeed some unmitigated positives in his story, especially his pride in his education. Describing how he felt when his parents attended his graduation, he states, “It was just great, you know, again the sense of accomplishment, the pride that I would see in their faces that, even though I was a convicted criminal, having taken someone's life, they still felt pride of some of

the things that I could do, my accomplishments.” Another consistent thread is the hope that he can repair the relationship with his daughter and have a meaningful relationship with his grandchildren.

On the other hand, though he was ultimately able to provide a “high point” related to his graduation, he initially struggled to think of a positive experience, wishing instead to volunteer a negative experience and minimizing his two most positive experiences – his education and his release – by stating that he was not able to elaborate on them. His hesitance to provide a high point may suggest that positive experiences are not so salient and easily retrievable for him. Additionally, he appeared somewhat foreboding about his future. For instance, when asked to describe his future hopes, dreams, and plans, he stated, “54 years old. I spent half of my life in prison. I don’t have a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of. Right now I don’t have anything to retire on. As I mentioned earlier, I’m in debt up to my eyeballs. You know, perhaps I can find something down the line to be able to do away with some of these to ease the burden on my shoulders to ease my financial situation.” While his future is not without hope, he remains equivocal about whether or not he will be able to improve his situation.

Thus, the high prevalence of both contamination and redemption scores in Enrique’s narrative seems to reflect the dual realities of his experience. On the one hand, he was indeed committed to positive change, to making something profoundly positive out of the negative. On the other hand, he found often that his engagement with drugs and criminal activity undid some of the good things he had worked to create.

Enrique’s moral steadfastness score of 2 was below the mean score for the sample. He received this score for his discussion of a positive childhood memory, in which he clearly

expressed how important it had been to him to take responsibility when he unexpectedly found himself facing teenage fatherhood. He also demonstrated clarity about his religious values when asked for a religious, spiritual, or transcendent moment in his life. Here he discussed his attempt to reconcile Buddhist teachings about meditation, which he found extremely useful during his time in prison, with his Catholic upbringing. These were indeed meaningful examples of his commitment to a coherent set of values, though in the overall context of the interview, such examples were relatively scarce. Given some evidence in previous research of a correlation between moral steadfastness and resilience, the relative infrequency with which Enrique drew upon his moral values may be an indication that he is less adept than some of the other subjects at using moral or religious conviction as a source of positive self esteem and resilience.

Table 14

*Interview Summary for Less Adaptive Case 2*

Table of Contents

1. Childhood
2. The Fuckup
3. The Rehabilitation
4. Stage 4

High Point: Graduating from College Program while Inside

Low Point: Mother's death

Turning Point: Birth of son

Positive Childhood Scene: Going to see the Wiz on Broadway, chasing the dog on stage

Negative Childhood Scene: Very frightening spanking from father

Vivid Adult Memory: Assaulted by friend while inside

Wisdom Scene: [Struggles to answer] Learning to defer gratification, avoid impulsive decisions with bad consequences

Religious/Spiritual Scene: Feeling protected, by Black Jesus, by her mother

Next Chapter: "It's not going to be easy" [Cancer diagnosis]

Future Hopes, Dreams, and Plans: Taking things one day at a time, just focusing on waking up tomorrow

Life Project: Women's Building that was formerly a correctional facility

## Less Adaptive Case Two: Alexis

Alexis is a woman who, unlike most of the subjects in the sample, served a string of relatively short sentences and had short periods of time in between in which she was not incarcerated. Her scores placed her 18<sup>th</sup> in resilience and tied for the lowest scores in both generativity and self efficacy. Like Enrique, her contamination score was roughly equivalent to her redemption score, which was itself slightly below the mean for the sample. Her contamination score was slightly above the mean. Her moral steadfastness score was 18<sup>th</sup> in the sample. Alex's Table of Contents and a summary of her scene responses are displayed in Table 14.

Alexis's Chapter 2 title, "The Fuck-up," is illustrative of how she locates herself and her eventual criminal offenses in regard to her familial context. She locates goodness in her family, viewing her childhood as advantaged, and the badness exclusively in herself. The interview exchange that follows occurred when Alexis was asked to elaborate on the content that would go in her Chapter 1, "Childhood":

Alexis: "I feel like I was privileged. I grew up thinking I was privileged. I really did.

Interviewer: "Yeah, in what way?"

Alexis: I went to private school, I was spoiled. Like the principal wanted to kick me, like, you know what I'm saying, I was terrible. But I had a happy childhood, I was like, I was the apple of my mother's eye, you know what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Yeah. You were really loved.

Alexis: And I was horrible. But they didn't know I was the devil behind closed doors, though.

Interviewer: In what way?

Alexis: I mean I was mischievous. I used to do dumb things. Little child stuff. I just, you know, there was a time to make a decision between right and wrong...I realize my

decision-making really wasn't the best. I was always very impulsive. [snaps fingers]  
Immediate gratification.

Similarly, in another segment, she states, "And from the way I was raised, to the lifestyle that I chose to live, it was incomprehensible. My mom did not understand that. My family did not understand that, how I let...me of all people. I was just the black sheep for a minute." Notice the contamination sequence here – she, in her view, in some way spoiled the goodness that she was given.

Her positive childhood memory in some way further reflected the discrepancy she saw between who she was and who, in particular, her mother was. Her highly cultured, educated mother takes 5-year-old Alexis to see Broadway musical *the Wiz* and, despite admonitions to behave, Alexis and her friend end up chasing a dog through the aisles, much to the amusement of the audience. While this was a playful and light-hearted memory, Alexis also emphasized the difference she felt between herself and her mom:

In my head that just shows that my moms was a different type of mother. She was playing no games – we had to do certain things. She wanted us to look cultured. When I think of that, that's what I think about. And all we wanted to do was play with the people's dog. I didn't care about none of that stuff – I was like 'Oh, doggy.'

Of the prompts, she struggled most to describe an instance in which she had behaved in a wise manner. She joked, "Me, now, me?" and proceeded to describe in an somewhat absolutist logic how she was impulsive and prone to making bad decisions, only mentioning in passing significant increases in her ability to imagine potential consequences and take the more future-oriented path. She even acknowledged – albeit reluctantly – that she had learned over the years to obtain gratification from imagining engaging in prohibited acts – like punching someone who angered her – rather than actually doing so. The interviewer had no doubt that Alexis possessed

wisdom and was often able to act on this wisdom, but it seemed foreign for her to imagine herself in this way.

As with Enrique, education was a rare bright spot in her narrative. Her “high point” scene is her graduation ceremony from a college program, when she was chosen to give a commencement speech. She states, “And my moms was there, and D [subject’s son] was there. And if I never do nothing right my whole life, that was definitely a thumb’s up, you know what I’m saying. That kind of erased all the disappointments that she [her mom] might have ever had. Yeah. Definitely. That’s definitely my high point.”

Unlike Enrique, however, Alexis did not demonstrate a clear pattern of redemption and contamination sequences in which the same scene frequently contained both sequences, with contamination ultimately prevailing. More commonly for Alexis, redemption sequences were found in positive scenes – high point, religious scene – and contamination sequences in scenes with a negative valence such as negative childhood memory. Aside from the lengthy chapters scene, there were two scenes in which Alexis demonstrated both redemption and contamination logics. In her vivid adult memory, some peaceful time to herself in the bathroom during her incarceration was spoiled when a former friend broke into assault her. However, this contamination sequence later turned to redemption when she was able to successfully defend herself without incurring disciplinary penalties because she was in the right. In her low point scene – the death of her mother – the redemption sequence is introduced first, with Alexis stating, immediately after identifying the death as her low point, “What it says about me is I’m more resilient than I thought because I thought I’d be destroyed. And I wasn’t. I stepped up and handled it.” The contamination logic – the loss of the positive relationship she and her mother might have had had they resolved conflict sooner – follows, “It shouldn’t have took for her to be

there [approaching death] for us to do that [reconcile]. Thus, the pattern of redemption and contamination sequences in Alexis' narratives is complex and variable, with contamination sometimes spoiling redemption but the redemption logic at other times prevailing.

As noted above, Alexis demonstrated very few examples of moral steadfastness themes, with her score of 1.5 the 18<sup>th</sup> lowest in the sample. The one scene coded as moral steadfastness by both raters was the religious scene, in which Alexis speaks of “black Jesus” as well as her general spiritual sense of being protected in times of danger by a higher being or a deceased loved one, such as her mother. Though this scene is significant, it is striking that Alexis does not tend to allude to her religious, moral, or ethical principles spontaneously as she discusses important life events. This may indicate that she doesn't always succeed in drawing on her personal value system as a source of meaning and positive self identity. Alexis characterizes her future with challenge and uncertainty. Reflecting her recent cancer diagnosis, Alexis volunteers a title for her next chapter: “It's Not Going to Be Easy.” When asked to describe her future plans, she emphasizes the need to take things one day at a time and describes her goal as simply waking up the next day. Still, when asked about a life project, she speaks eloquently about what it means to her to be involved in the creation of a Women's Building from a former prison. She looks upon the future with some trepidation, but also some hope.

### **More Adaptive Case One: Monique**

Turning to the “more adaptive” cases in the sample, we will next consider the narrative of an intervention subject who will be referred to as “Monique,” a woman who served approximately 20 years for a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder conviction. She consistently scored at the high end of study instruments. She scored as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most resilient, 3<sup>rd</sup> most generative, and tied for

Table 15

*Interview Summary for More Adaptive Case 1*

Table of Contents

Title of Life Story: The Transitions of Monique, The Transitions of My Life [she doesn't really title chapters, except for Chapters 6 and 7]

1. Birth of Children
2. Charged with Murder in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree
3. Going to Court
4. Incarcerated
5. The Parole Board
6. The Freedom Walk
7. Dealing with Health in Transition [successfully fighting cancer]

High Point: Day of release from prison, having her family there to greet her

Low Point: Sentenced 20 - Life

Turning Point: Choosing to engage in self-transformation after 7 years inside

Positive Childhood Scene: Playful banter with family

Negative Childhood Scene: Home robbery committed by a neighbor

Vivid Adult Memory: Graduating from GED while inside

Wisdom Scene: Setting limits with a woman who might have put program participants at risk

Religious/Spiritual Scene: Entire family joining a new church together on Easter Sunday

Next Chapter: Moving out of NYC

Future Hopes, Dreams, and Plans: Owning a home, so children and mom always have a place to go

Life Project: Working on alternatives to prison, especially for those with addiction

the 2<sup>nd</sup> most self efficacious in the sample. Her Table of Contents and key life scenes are displayed as Table 15.

Interestingly, her narrative evidenced fewer redemption sequences than average, though her number of contamination sequences was among the lowest in the sample (18<sup>th</sup>, to be precise). Her narrative evidenced high levels of moral steadfastness, with her score being the 5<sup>th</sup> highest in the sample.

Compared to the two control narratives discussed previously, Monique is much less explicit about her early family life and the circumstances that led to her criminal conviction. Indeed, her narrative completely obscures her childhood, as she begins her first chapter at motherhood. Her immediate family is certainly present in her narrative, but primarily as supporters during and after her incarceration. Similarly, she provides little detail about her crime and the factors that contributed to it, beyond acknowledging the conviction and the sentence and stating that, at the time of the crime, “life kind of went a little haywire for me.” It is risky to make inferences from absences, and, indeed, there is evidence that Monique was quite able to discuss her crime in a thoughtful and self-reflective way at the parole board hearing. In this light, it is possible that Monique’s narrative displays either an adaptive form of denial or discretion<sup>18</sup> in her choice of what to disclose during the interview. Still, it is notable that, unlike Alexis and Enrique, she did not construct a goodness to contrast with her own badness. Avoiding discussing childhood in depth may have been a way to avoid having to make either herself or her family “bad” to account for her crime.

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<sup>18</sup> Denial involves repressing information even from one’s own awareness, whereas discretion might involve a choice not to disclose something of which one is aware. It is not possible to determine from the available evidence which process was more prominent.

Monique's narratives also evidence an awareness of herself as a member of particular groups that have particular needs and are not always granted fair treatment. Recall the high prevalence of moral steadfastness scores in her narratives. Indeed, in several sections of her narrative, she eloquently spoke about unfairness – a questionnaire unfairly administered at a vulnerable time prior to inmates' parole hearings, an arbitrary parole monitoring process that refused to end her parole status for irrational reasons. Further, she identified women coming home from prison as facing very different challenges from men. She says:

Women come home and we jump back into trying to be a mom and getting our houses together, making sure the children are alright. Men come home, and they find a woman to live with. They don't come home and get their kids. They see their kids when they see their kids. And, so your life really isn't as hard as a woman's life is coming back in.

Accurately identifying the obstacles she and those like her face, being willing to recognize when authorities act arbitrarily – these may have been self-protective strategies for Monique, allowing her to maintain a sense of herself as resilient, efficacious, and generative.

Further illustration of Monique's high level of commitment to her personal values is found in the work she did while inside. She was able to channel her love for her children into meaningful work in the children's and parenting centers, helping other inmates to remember that they could remain engaged parents while inside. Of this work she stated:

For me, when I was in [Prison Name], the most important thing was mothers and children. I thought it was important that mothers be able to continue to bond with their children. So I worked in the children's center, the parenting center, and what I did there was I worked with moms and children because I had young children, and girls [who had children] was just coming into the facility - it was important for them to know that they could still be a mother from behind the walls, so I taught parenting classes.

The clarity about her own values that she demonstrated with her high moral steadfastness score was likely a protective factor.

Monique evidenced redemptive sequences in describing finishing her GED while incarcerated and participating in a graduation ceremony in which she strived to send a message of hope to her fellow inmates. She stated, “And it was a great moment because it showed people that um, that even when the odds are against you, if you push hard you can make it. So it made me feel good because it made a lot of girls in[side] think, if Monique took the test and passed it, then I can take the test and pass it. So that’s what helped a lot of people and made me feel great.” Monique’s narrative certainly has contamination logics as well – feeling that her life was over when she received her sentence, losing a sense of safety when her childhood home was robbed – but these sequences are less prevalent than are the redemptive arcs. Further, and in contrast to Enrique’s narrative, with the exception of the very content-heavy “Chapters” section, Monique earned the score of redemption, unmarred by a contamination sequence, for several scenes: high point, turning point, and vivid adult memory. Contamination sequences were present in the “negative” scenes – low point and negative childhood memory. Unlike Enrique, who tended to have redemption sequences and contamination sequences side by side in the same scenes, as redemption turned to contamination, Monique experienced several redemption sequences that didn’t themselves get spoiled.

Consistent with her adaptive scores, Monique envisions a future that looks bright, in which she is able to obtain meaningful personal accomplishments – like providing a home for her children and mother – as well as to continue working to change a system that she considers unjust. She also demonstrated flexibility in her response, not visibly struggling to respond to any of the prompts.

## Table 16

### *Interview Summary for More Adaptive Case 2*

#### Table of Contents

1. Disruption /Departure [mother's drug addiction]
2. In Too Deep [becoming involved in crime]
3. Rapture [First love and fatherhood]
4. Being the Father I Never Had
5. Desperate Times [his crime and incarceration]
6. Finding Myself in Prison
7. Epilogue: My Reentry Journey

High Point: Being present for the birth of son

Low Point: Taking a life; Shame of spilling dirty clothes on subway as child

Turning Point: Learning of death of his son's mother from HIV while inside

Positive Childhood Scene: Going to movies with family in years prior to the start of his mom's drug use

Negative Childhood Scene: Protecting his younger brother from his mom's attempt to steal his money

Vivid Adult Memory: His release, being picked up by his wife

Wisdom Scene: Handling a conflict with his step-son wisely

Religious/Spiritual Scene: [Difficulty answering] A peaceful green space in one of the prisons in which he resided

Next Chapter: His business

Future Hopes, Dreams, and Plans: Improving his relationship with his son, working on his relationship with time, Maintaining his marriage

Life Project: His son; Raising awareness about the emotional ramifications of incarceration

## More Adaptive Case Two: Jonathan

Intervention Case Two, who we'll call Jonathan, is a man in his late 40s male who served over twenty years for a second degree murder charge. Like Monique, he consistently scored on the "more adaptive" end of the sample. He scored 3<sup>rd</sup> on the measure of resilience, 5<sup>th</sup> on the measure of generativity, and tied for second on the measure of self efficacy. He displayed slightly above the mean number of contamination sequences, but an even greater number of redemption sequences, and a very high number of moral steadfastness scores. His table of contents and scene lists are displayed as Table 16.

Jonathan evidences from the beginning of his narrative a nuanced understanding of the societal context in which he entered a more criminal world. In his first chapter, "Devastation/Departure," he identifies the impact of his mother's addiction to crack cocaine and locates this addiction in the context of an epidemic. Of learning of his mom's addiction he states:

I was devastated, like really, really devastated...from that point my life and my family's life has never been the same. And that's not to point a finger at my mom because I'm very compassionate towards her - I love her; we have a great relationship - but it devastated not just my family, but at that time the Black and Brown communities. I couldn't understand it at the time, but I since learned that it spread to all communities. So yeah, so that's why I said it was devastating. We never fully recovered as a family, and that's the truth, yeah.

From this chapter he recounts his own entry into criminal activity which he connects to his mother's addiction. It is striking that he offers an account of this path that locates both him and his mother compassionately in a larger context. He is able to render intelligible his increasing involvement in a dangerous world without making of himself a "black sheep." He further recognizes the way in which he reduced being a good father to being able to provide materially for his son and acknowledges this world view as a contributing factor to his involvement in drug sales, the context in which he eventually fatally wounded another person.

Jonathan, like Enrique, struggled to answer the “high point” question, but for the opposite reason. “My god. Just one high point?” he asked. “Okay. Yeah because there are several, there are several.” He eventually decided on the birth of his son as *the* high point.

As mentioned above, Jonathan’s narrative is marked by both redemption and contamination sequences. As with Monique, there were some positive moments that evidenced only redemption, not contamination – particularly Jonathan’s turning point and vivid adult memory, both of which were related to his wife. When one segment featured both redemption and contamination sequences, however, the pattern was quite distinct from that exhibited in Enrique’s narrative earlier. Whereas Enrique’s narratives often featured a bad event turned into a positive event (a redemption), that was then itself returned to a negative event (contamination) – Bad > Good > Bad, Jonathan’s narrative segment more often ended in Redemption, Good > Bad > Good. In other words, he was able to more stably turn something undesirable into something worthy of protecting. Consider, for instance, his negative childhood memory, in which he learned that his mother was stealing the money his little brother earned at the grocery store (a clear contamination sequence). Though it is very difficult and in tension with the norm of “Respecting your elders,” Jonathan finds a way to protect his brother and thereby stand up for his values. When asked what this moment says about him, he replied, “I think it says that I don’t like injustice. I felt that it was unfair. I think that it says that, um, you have to stand up for what you believe to be right, even if it’s somebody you love dearly.”

In this vein a notable feature of Jonathan’s narrative was the prevalence of moral steadfastness scores reflecting a strong and stable set of guiding values. With five such scores, Jonathan’s moral steadfastness score was tied for second highest in the sample. He referenced his

coherent set of ethical and political beliefs throughout the interview, including in the high point scene, negative childhood memory, and all of the future-oriented scenes.

When asked about his future, Jonathan identified a range of goals related to his business, his family – particularly his relationships with his wife and son – and his internal world. In regard to the latter, he spoke eloquently about how his relationship with time has evolved since leaving prison. He states:

in prison, time for me..felt oppressive, you know, just oppressive and restrictive and all that. And yet, it was regimented and allowed me to uh..develop certain disciplines, to be honest. I mean really. You know, under that regimentation. Now that I'm out, there's a process that I'm learning, there's a serious process...mental and emotional and even physical - to develop a different relationship with time that is not oppressive but is instead, the way I define it, is elusive—like, it's like it just slips through your hands, you can't get it, I can't get it, it's like wow – I have to be honest with you it's like this is a little struggle here.

When asked about a life project, he identified as a passion raising awareness about the lasting emotional consequences of long-term imprisonment.

### **Summary of Case Analysis**

This brief consideration of cases at the low and high ends of the assessed instruments offers a number of insights that usefully supplement the quantitative analysis. This section will consider those insights in light of the qualitative hypotheses offered in Chapter Two.

Qualitative Hypothesis One predicted more adaptive narratives to demonstrative a greater number of redemptive sequences relative to contamination sequences than would less adaptive narratives. This hypothesis was supported by the data. The less adaptive cases either had equivalent numbers of contamination and redemption sequences, as in the case of Enrique, or slightly more contamination than redemption sequences, as in the case of Alexis. In contrast, the

more adaptive cases both had higher numbers of redemption sequences than contamination sequences.

This result suggests that number of redemption scores in the narrative – the variable assessed in the quantitative analysis - may not be the most meaningful variable; instead a variable capturing the relative prevalence of redemption themes and contamination themes may more accurately reflect the underlying dynamics. In order to evaluate this possibility, a variable was created that subtracted the number of contamination themes from the number of redemption themes. This variable, while still not statistically significant at the .05 level, approached statistical significance with a p-value of .087 when correlated with resilience. While this is tentative evidence at best, it suggests that future research evaluating the predictive value of these themes should not just examine the variables of redemption and contamination sequences in isolation but should also consider their relative frequency. It is possible that redemption sequences remain indicators of a more adaptive narrative once the number of contamination sequences is in some way corrected for.

In addition to predictions about the relative frequency of redemption and contamination sequences, Qualitative Hypothesis Two predicted that more adaptive cases would be less likely to receive scores of redemption and contamination for the same scene; when they did, they were expected to evidence a pattern of Contamination > Redemption, or Good>Bad>Good rather than the reverse.

This hypothesis was only partly supported by the data. It was certainly the case that both of the more adaptive cases tended to evidence redemption and contamination sequences for distinct scenes rather than for the same scene. In the rare case that they demonstrated both sequences in the same scene, the pattern tended to be contamination preceding redemption.

While the opposite pattern was pronounced for one of the control cases, that of Enrique, for the case of Alexis the pattern was less clear-cut than predicted, as she often earned redemption and contamination scores for distinct scenes or demonstrated a pattern of contamination preceding redemption.

Qualitative Hypothesis Three predicted that more adaptive cases would articulate a positive view of self and demonstrate compassionate awareness of the role of difficult environmental factors in their life narratives, while cases indicating less adaptive functioning would tend to locate goodness outside the self and badness within the self. This hypothesis was supported in the four narratives assessed here. Both of the less adaptive accounts emphasized the privilege of their early environments and located “badness” somewhat intrinsically in the self. In contrast, both of the more adaptive cases found ways of rescuing a “good enough” self from a fraught history. Monique simply avoided these parts of her story and took refuge instead in a coherent value system that she was able to embody in meaningful work, even while inside. Jonathan contextualized his own path to prison in the tragedy of his mother’s addiction, itself part of an epidemic impacting black and brown communities at that time. Interestingly, while this qualitative analysis did not include explicit exploration of self compassion themes, this difference across narratives seems to boil down to the ability to narrate one’s path to prison in a self compassionate manner.

A final conclusion emerging from the qualitative analysis concerns a similarity across the more adaptive and less adaptive cases that warrants further investigation in the exploratory qualitative analysis that follows. In all four cases, education secured in prison was identified as of great personal significance, with a graduation ceremony held in prison frequently occupying a high point or vivid adult memory scene. While the similarity across cases suggests that education

may not necessarily differentiate more adaptive cases from less adaptive, the subjective salience of education in these four diverse narratives is worthy of attention, particularly in a political context that renders contested incarcerated persons' access to education. In the section below, educational themes are further evaluated in the full universe of case narratives.

#### Exploratory Qualitative Analysis: Salience of Educational Themes

Given the researcher's preliminary observation that education was frequently emphasized in subjects' narratives and the focus of the research question on in-prison interventions that facilitate change, the researcher investigated more systematically the salience of education in subject narratives. In order to do so, the PI reviewed again each transcript and determined whether or not each subject spontaneously and explicitly identified a college education program or another in-prison program as especially significant in any of the following sections of their life story interview: Chapters, High Point, Turning Point, or Vivid Adult Memory. In order to be coded as an instance of educational emphasis, the educational experience had to: 1) be discussed for at least a couple of sentences and explicitly identified as important to the subject's personal development in the subject's spontaneous elucidation of their Life Chapters OR 2) be identified as the explicit main topic of the subject's High Point, Turning Point, OR Vivid Adult Memory scene. Table 17 presents sample narratives coded as educational salience for each of the relevant scenes.

Table 17  
*Sample Educational Salience Coding*

Section	Subject	Sample Text
Chapters	Intervention	<p>“Um, I got into college and did well, which certainly was a help. And college taught me, you know, how to use tools for evaluation and to focus on, you know, to really experience that there was another world outside of my experience and who I wanted to be in that world and whose lives I wanted to impact and how I was, you know, both a product of and could contribute to, you know, that larger world. And you know, we had a really, really cohesive college community there. That was, you know, really supported by the prison administration at that time. We had a core group of really enthusiastic, thirsty students who, you know, we gave each other a support system. So through them, through the feedback from the professors, I learned a ton about myself. I learned a ton about engaging and reciprocating and sharing with, you know, my um..my peers.”</p>
High Point	Control	<p>“Alright, education. As I stated, I was a high school dropout when I was arrested in 1987... Got in there late, got my GED, learned about college in prison, I said that’s what I’m going to do. So I got my Bachelor’s degree I remember, 1995 was graduation, summer of 1995... But it was a special moment for me that day because my mother, my father were present. My mother, who never missed a visit. My father, even though he didn’t raise me, he showed up. And it was a very exciting moment in my life because I accomplished something. I was, I was the first one of my brothers and sisters to get a college degree, in prison nonetheless, but I was the first one. But that was a very, very happy moment for me because of the accomplishment that I had</p>

		made and being able to get that.”
Section	Subject	Sample Text
Turning Point	Intervention	<p>“So I think that a good turning point would be my college education. I think that uh, me deciding to go to school while I was in prison was a huge leap and a huge leap of faith also because when you are in prison and you’re doing time, especially the amount I was doing, you could fold into a cocoon and never want to come out and do anything. So I think that allowing yourself to create a ball of energy that gives you enough strength to say that, even though I’m going through all of this, I’m going to get my education. I’m going to rise above all of this, and I’m going to get my education.. So I think that having a higher education allowed me to find out more about life, people, society, and find out definitely about myself. And it got me to a point where I was able to now decide and choose what was important for me at that moment and for the future and what it would look like... So I’m grateful for my education because it saved my life in prison.”</p>
Vivid Adult Memory	Control	<p>“That memory would have to be when I graduated, when I got my bachelor’s degree. It was in 2000, we were in the gym. And when they called people’s names for graduation, everybody’s screaming, hollering. And I just remember them screaming the loudest when they called my name. I was like-- WOW. It was just, it was amazing. And my mother and my kids were there, my niece was there... But I just remembered them screaming the loudest when they called my name and it made me feel like, oh these people appreciate me, I’m not all mean and they think--they recognize what I’ve done and who I am. It was just a really amazing feeling to hear so many people scream that loud for me, it</p>

was crazy-- while my kids were there. I think it was important for me for my kids to know how people felt about me. It was pretty cool, yeah.”

Of the 20 subjects, 80% spontaneously mentioned in-prison programming as important parts of their life stories. Both control and intervention subjects were much more likely than not to identify the centrality of in-prison programming to their development. Further, though not predicted by the researcher, a tentative pattern emerged across treatment condition. Of the control subjects, 75% mentioned the salience of educational programs, while 25% did not. In the intervention group, an even higher proportion of subjects met the criteria for educational salience, with 87.5% identifying educational programs as significant and only 12.5% not doing so. This difference across treatment condition did not meet statistical significance in a chi-square test,  $\chi^2(1, n = 20) = .47, p = .49$ . However, given the exploratory nature of this section, the small sample size, and the generally high base rate of educational emphasis, it is worth noting this apparent difference, the possible meaning of which will be explored below.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### Overview of Key Findings

This study compared a group of formerly incarcerated Program Participants to a group of formerly incarcerated persons matched to the intervention group on time served and time elapsed since release. Intervention participants evidenced significantly more generativity, as measured by the Loyola Generativity scale, than did controls, but they did not differ significantly from controls on other measures associated with psychological adaptation, specifically compassion for self, compassion for others, resilience, and self-efficacy. Compassion for self and compassion for others were very strongly correlated for the intervention group but were not correlated to a statistically significant degree for the control group. Life story narratives of intervention subjects did not differ significantly from the narratives of controls in prevalence of any of the five “redemptive life” themes or in prevalence of contamination themes, though moral steadfastness, early advantage, and sensitivity to the suffering of others approached statistical significance in one version of the coding.

Qualitative analysis compared the life story narratives of the most resilient, generative, and self efficacious members of the sample to the narratives of the least resilient, generative, and self-efficacious. This analysis found that more adaptive subjects, when compared to less adaptive, demonstrated greater numbers of redemptive sequences relative to contamination sequences. Moreover, more adaptive subjects were more likely to have specific scenes unmarred by contamination sequences as well as to have scenes end in redemption sequences – that is in good outcomes - rather than in contamination sequences. More adaptive subjects were also more likely than less adaptive subjects to protect an image of the self as good despite their crime and

incarceration histories. Additionally, both control and intervention subjects were highly likely to spontaneously emphasize the importance of education received while incarcerated; intervention subjects were slightly more likely than control subjects to do so.

### **Limitations**

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study prior to further discussion of study results and implications. One obvious and important limitation is its small sample size, which may have influenced the results in several respects. First, and perhaps most obviously, small sample size limited the power of the study and may have led to a Type II error in which meaningful relationships actually present in the data were rejected in favor of the null hypothesis. The study was not sensitive enough to pick up small effect sizes, which is why the only statistically significant results concern effect sizes that are modest or stronger. This may or may not explain why the treatment condition was only rarely correlated to outcome variables of interest, as such relationships may be absent or simply too small to be identified in a sample of 20. The inability to arbitrate between these two very different hypotheses means that in some ways the study was ultimately unable to test its main hypotheses of interest. Yet, the relatively low p-values for most variables of interest, unique relationship between compassion for self and compassion for others in the intervention group, and qualitative analysis emphasizing the relevance of study variables to subject adaptation all support the impact of the intervention.

An additional weakness of the research design is its correlational nature that does not permit identification of causal relationships. For instance, as will be discussed further below, the statistically significant correlation between treatment condition and generativity could indicate several very different empirical phenomena. It is possible that the intervention leads to increases

in participant generativity; that more generative people are more likely than their less generative peers to participate in the intervention; or that this correlation is the spurious result of omission of another important variable. Of course, these three outcomes are not necessarily equally likely. In the discussion section that follows, the respective likelihood of these possibilities will be considered in light of study evidence.

An additional limitation concerns selection effects inherent in the research design that may limit the generalizability of study results. As mentioned above, the recruitment strategy was differentially effective with female as compared to male participants. While almost all eligible female intervention subjects participated, a much smaller proportion of male candidates was locatable. Of these, a smaller percentage agreed to participate when compared to the female candidates. This means that we know far less about the male intervention subjects as a whole than we do about the female intervention subjects. How damaging a selection effect is to inference depends partly on the causal processes driving the selection effect. Here it is likely that this differential selection pattern is partly related to idiosyncrasies of the intervention's history and logistics. For instance, due to Department of Corrections restrictions, fewer female participants have completed the intervention. Due to personal relationships between program staff and these participants, a larger proportion of these participants are locatable. It is also possible that variation in response rate was partly related to gender conditioning in regard to helpfulness, with female subjects socialized to be especially helpful and male subjects less conditioned in this way.

Given that judicial processes vary significantly from state to state, it is also worth noting that this study concerned exclusively persons incarcerated in the state of New York. While

certain insights may remain applicable more broadly, it is also possible that variation in state judicial processes might limit the generalizability of some of this study's findings.

Despite the above limitations, this study remains a rare effort to study systematically a fascinating population of both practical and theoretical relevance, as well as to begin to evaluate the effectiveness of an innovative prison intervention. Study strengths include care taken to match controls to the intervention group as well as to collect both quantitative data and rich qualitative data in the form of narrative.

## **Discussion**

One of the most salient results of this study is in fact a non-result: treatment condition was only very rarely significantly related to the outcome variables of interest. Given the small sample size, this evidence is worth interpreting cautiously. As stated in Chapter 2, this study was by necessity a hard test of the intervention's efficacy, as participants were studied often years after participation in the intervention. Further, though not previously discussed, the control group may itself not have been representative of those transitioning back to civilian life after serving long sentences in state prisons. In a small sample, it is possible that flukes of probability can lead to atypical samples – this is, in fact, one of the rationales for securing a larger sample size, other things being equal. By chance, for instance, two of the control participants were students at (different) Ivy League universities at the time of the study and had seemingly realistic plans to pursue careers in law. If, indeed, the control group happened to be more resilient and adaptive than is typical, this may have made it even less likely that the intervention group would prove to be significantly higher on indicators of positive adaptation and resilience. Further, for several study hypotheses – particularly those related to compassion for others, resilience, and self-

efficacy – differences across treatment condition were in the predicted direction, while not statistically significant. Given the very small sample size, it is certainly possible that these differences would become statistically significant in a larger study.

Importantly, Program Participants differed significantly from controls on the variable of generativity, a measure of subjects' behavioral investment in making a difference and leaving a legacy for future generations. Interpretation of this difference is contestable. Given that the treatment group evidenced greater involvement in programming while inside than did the control group – involvement that largely preceded the intervention - it is possible and perhaps even likely that the Longtermers Project attracted participants who were already more generative than the average incarcerated person. Still, the generativity measure is not equivalent to program involvement, as generativity captures not only behaviors but beliefs about one's impact on the world. Thus, it remains possible that the intervention facilitated participants' internalization of the expectation that they could and would have a positive impact on the world and leave a positive legacy. For a sample in which 75% of participants were convicted of crimes in which another human being lost his/her (in this sample, almost always his) life, internalizing a sense of one's ability to be a force for positive change is certainly a significant accomplishment that entails negotiating many negative societal messages about one's self. Of course, these ideas are tentative, as only longitudinal research with a matched control group would be able to demonstrate definitively that the intervention caused an increase in participant generativity.

Though treatment condition was rarely statistically significant, other patterns of significant results in the data supported the theoretical assumptions of the intervention. Notably, compassion for self was significantly correlated with compassion for others, which was itself positively correlated with a number of outcome variables indicating positive adaptation. Even

more interestingly, the correlation between compassion for self and compassion for others was very strong when intervention subjects were considered separately from controls, but no longer statistically significant when control subjects alone were considered. While compassion for others is a relatively new instrument, early validation studies (Pommier, 2013) did not find a general correlation between compassion for self and compassion for others, which were theorized to be separate constructs. Further, conventional models of prisoner rehabilitation, while perhaps not making their assumptions explicit, certainly do not posit these as positively correlated, as “taking responsibility” for crime, a necessary ingredient for rehabilitation, is conceived as in tension with realistic acknowledgement of circumstances – whether psychological or environmental – that made one’s involvement in crime more likely. In this context, then, the pattern of a very strong correlation between these two variables only within the intervention group is certainly striking.

Again interpretation of this finding is not so straightforward, particularly given that the intervention group did not differ to a statistically significant degree from the control group on either measure. Though not an explicit focus of the intervention, it is possible that program participants infer a connection between compassion for others and compassion for self from certain features of the curriculum, such as the fact that participants are given so much space during the program to think about their own lives and their own complex paths to prison. In this way, it is possible that participants learn over the course of the intervention to connect these two constructs. If so, it is striking that participants would retain such a lesson several years after the intervention. Other hypotheses might be very tentatively derived from the pattern of differences across groups on these two measures. Remember that, while differences across groups were not statistically significant in either case, there was virtually no difference at all in group means on

the compassion for self measure, while there was a difference in the predicted direction for the compassion for others measure. If (and only if) this difference became statistically significant in a larger sample size and could be demonstrated longitudinally to be a consequence and not an antecedent of the intervention, it is possible that the intervention is able to increase participants' compassion for others by drawing upon their self compassion. Again, this is only a speculation pending future research.

It is important to address here a possible critique of the self-compassion finding. Recall that traditional approaches to prisoner rehabilitation emphasize responsibility-taking and are highly skeptical of excuse-making or other behaviors – rationalization, defensiveness - that deflect from individual responsibility. A critic might argue that what is labeled here as self-compassion is suspiciously close to the kind of abdication of individual responsibility that is likely criminogenic and that one would not wish to foster in persons incarcerated for violent crime. I believe that this criticism is misplaced for several reasons. First, such a view misunderstands the concept of self-compassion at both a theoretical and an operational level. As Neff (2015) has eloquently articulated, self-compassion is distinct from emotional states such as self-pity that one might expect to interfere with responsibility-taking, as self-compassion entails a recognition of one's suffering as part of the human experience and an ability to accept and then release this suffering. Nor is self-compassion synonymous with “letting yourself off the hook.” In fact, research has demonstrated that those high in self-compassion are less likely to engage in the type of rumination characteristic of those with anxiety and depression and better able to make positive changes or amends when they act in ways that fall short of their own or others' standards (Neff 2015, p. 3 and 6). Additionally, in contrast to four measures of self-esteem evaluated by Neff (2003), the Self-Compassion Scale was not significantly correlated to a

measure of narcissism, a correlation that one might expect were self-compassion to be indicative of self-centered avoidance of responsibility. Second, if self-compassion were operating as a stand-in for avoidance of responsibility, one would expect a distinct pattern of results than those that emerged here. Namely, one might expect a main effect across treatment condition for self-compassion, while in fact self-compassion was the only variable to appear in almost equivalent degrees in the control and intervention groups. Additionally, this explanation could not explain why compassion for self and compassion for other were positively correlated only for the treatment condition, as it would predict, if anything, a negative correlation between these two constructs. Thus, though the interpretation of the self-compassion finding remains contestable, an explanation that views self-compassion as synonymous with excuse-making and avoidance of responsibility is not tenable.

Returning to study results, there was likewise support in the data for a cluster of variables – compassion for self, compassion for others, and self-efficacy – positively and significantly correlated with resilience. This finding confirms the selection of variables in the study as likely to be meaningful indicators of adaptation and well-being in the population under study. Interestingly, however, the one variable shown to be significantly related to treatment condition – that of generativity – is left isolated from this island of resilience, as it is not significantly correlated to resilience or to any of the other three variables. Further research should investigate whether this finding is an artifact of the small sample size or is instead reflective of true independence between resilience and generativity. Should the results hold in a larger sample – both that the intervention only impacts generativity and that generativity is unrelated to other variables correlated with resilience – then this would have negative implications for the efficacy of the intervention.

There was little support in this study for differential prevalence of certain narrative themes across treatment condition. Again, this may have been the result of the small sample size, which may have been ill-suited to pick up nuanced narrative differences. The McAdams and Guo study (2015) utilized almost eight times the number of subjects, 157; Maruna's utilized 50 subjects. Results did appear sensitive to alternative coding of the narrative themes, as several themes - moral steadfastness, early advantage, and sensitivity to the suffering of others - approached statistical significance when the most generous version of the coding system was utilized. There were also significant correlations present among some of the themes, consistent with McAdams' hypothesis that the themes cluster together into an adaptive notion of a "redemptive self," though these correlations did not extend to all five themes. In this study, moral steadfastness correlated positively with pro-social goals; pro-social goals also correlated positively with redemptive sequences. Moral steadfastness was alone among the McAdams' themes in correlating significantly with some of the quantitative measures, namely compassion for others and generativity. Contamination themes did not correlate with the McAdams' themes but did correlate negatively with resilience.

While demographic patterns were not related to the primary research questions of the study, some meaningful trends nevertheless emerged. Subjects endorsing gay or bisexual identity endorsed lower average resilience scores than their heterosexual peers, a finding that is consistent with the general evidence on the mental health challenges LGBTQ-individuals face in a general societal context that privileges heterosexual identity. Further, in this sample, Hispanic individuals demonstrated lower rates of employment than non-Hispanic subjects. Additionally, a negative relationship between Hispanic identity and resilience approached statistical significance. Lifetime history of substance abuse was a risk factor associated with less resilience

and generativity, while lifetime history of mental illness was associated with less self compassion. In terms of narrative themes, black identity and religiosity were protective against contamination themes, a result that is consistent with McAdams' findings on the resonance of redemptive narratives in African American communities. Mental health history was associated with greater prevalence of contamination themes, which the reader may recall are negatively correlated with resilience.

The qualitative analysis, while not designed to answer the direct question of the intervention's efficacy, nevertheless offered meaningful insights into narrative features likely to be displayed by subjects coping with transition from prison with resilience, generativity, and self-efficacy. Those subjects who are flourishing have found ways to protect a view of themselves as somehow good and worthy, sometimes through emphasizing investment in meaningful, pro-social work and other times through acknowledging complex systemic forces that played a role in their paths to incarceration. For these subjects, then, self compassion does not appear to come at the expense of compassion for others. Subjects faring less well, in contrast, often come close to viewing themselves as intrinsically bad, despite family and societal contexts that they view – perhaps with some distortion – as advantaged. Additionally, subjects faring particularly well in their transitions display narratives in which positive meaning is made of even intrinsically bad outcomes and only rarely are good things left in states of contamination. While only correlational, these distinct narrative patterns evidenced by more adaptive and less adaptive subjects point towards the potential goals of interventions designed for populations of persons incarcerated for their roles in violent crime. Among these goals is the provision of self-reflective space that allows subjects to grapple with the complex, positive and negative aspects of outcomes as well as to rescue a “good enough” self in a world all too quick to offer a

simplistic, ready-made narrative that leaves no space for the potential goodness of the offender. These goals are clearly consonant with the goals of the Coming to Terms curriculum.

An additional result of the study emerged as something of a surprise: the overwhelming significance – at least in the perception of subjects – of formal education undertaken while subjects were incarcerated. 80% of subjects spontaneously identified education as essential, positive aspects of their life stories, with many subjects listing it as a High Point or Turning Point in their life narratives. An even higher percentage of intervention subjects spontaneously elucidated the salience of education, though they did not differ significantly from the control group in level of education. Interestingly, even the two less adaptive cases examined in the qualitative analysis identified education in this way as a source of positive self esteem, of pride in accomplishment. It is plausible that, absent education as a source of positive self investment, these subjects may have fared even poorer in transition. As the importance of education emerged inductively from the narratives and was not the explicit focus of the study – though education certainly aligns with the study’s interest in effective prison programming - this is a topic worthy of more systematic investigation in future research. One hypothesis to emerge from this investigation is that education may facilitate successful transition from prison partly via the pathway of positive self concept, as distinct from its more instrumental, albeit highly important, role in, for instance, securing employment.

### **Revisiting the Literature**

How do the findings here contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the potential for growth in those convicted of violent crime? In a hard test of the efficacy of the Longtermers’ project in study with a small sample, intervention subjects were found to differ significantly from

control subjects on the dimension of generativity. Even more importantly, a strong correlation was found between compassion for self and compassion for others for the intervention subjects, while no significant correlation was present for control subjects. These findings provide preliminary evidence of the impact of the intervention, which was based on the premise that developing compassion for those harmed by subjects' actions need not come at the expense of compassion for their own complex set of circumstances. These results, in addition to the narratives of transformation offered by the subjects, support McAdams and Maruna's contention that acts of violence need not be deterministic, as change across the life span is possible. Given the current crisis of mass incarceration in the United States and the very real legal, ethical, and logistical challenge of an aging prison population, these preliminary findings suggest the value of investing in programs that recognize, honor, and facilitate change. Further, while there will remain political logics that incentive conservatism in parole boards, the growing body of psychological research suggests that the entitive logic in which a person is defined by an act of violence significantly underestimates the human capacity for growth. This research suggests a valuable role for psychologists in provision of relevant expertise in policy debates that often feature discourse about incarcerated persons that, to say the least, lacks psychological nuance.

This study also supports the nascent chorus of research highlighting development of a positive view of self (e.g. Armour & Silva, 2018; Maruna, 2000, 2014) as an essential challenge in the transformation away from criminality and towards a life of meaningful generativity. Views of prisoner responsibility that emphasize guilt and shame without offering opportunities for the protection and nurturance of a "good enough" self may backfire, leaving the individual with little motivation for growth. In this vein, this study likewise highlights the importance of meaningful programming in prison that can nurture interests and talents of prisoners. In addition

to the preliminary evidence here on the efficacy of the Longtermers Project, the qualitative narratives of research subjects also speak to the positive impact of college courses and professional programs offered inside, programs that have been politically contested in recent years.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study undertook a preliminary analysis of the effectiveness of the Coming to Terms program. While results were mixed, several findings pointed towards the intervention's likely effectiveness, suggesting that, at the very least, further research is indicated. In addition to evidencing more generativity than their peers in the control group, intervention subjects also displayed a very strong connection between self compassion and compassion for others, a connection that was not apparent for the control group. Given that one of the assumptions of the curriculum is that concern for others and concern for self need not be at odds, this is a meaningful finding. Moreover, the more and less adaptive uses of redemptive and contamination sequences shone in the qualitative accounts, as did the importance of protecting a good enough self even in – or especially in - the midst of a complex legacy. That these findings emerged in such a small sample suggests the likely utility of investigating the intervention in future studies that prioritize gathering a significantly larger sample. Yet, it is also important to acknowledge the null findings that emerged and to thus remain somewhat cautious about study interpretation pending future research. With the exception of generativity, there was not a statistically significant difference across treatment condition in the other main outcome variables, including resilience, self-efficacy, compassion for self, and compassion for others. There was likewise less support for differences in narrative themes across treatment condition when

assessed quantitatively, though several themes – most notably moral steadfastness – approached statistical significance in one version of the coding.

In sum, amid several non-significant findings, preliminary evidence of program effectiveness did emerge. Further research is necessary to determine whether or not these results hold and /or whether other significant results manifest in a larger sample.

Appendix A.

*Matching Criteria*

Table A1  
*Matching Variables and Categories*

Variable	Matching Category 1	Matching Category 2
Total Time Served	10 - 20 years	> 20 years
Time Since Release	.75 - 3 years	> 3 years

Table A1.2  
*Treatment Condition by Matching Category*

Variable	Intervention (Percent)	Control (Percent)
Total Time Served		
10 - 20 years	50.0%	50.0%
> 20 years	50.0%	50.0%
Time Since Release		
.75 - 3 years	62.5%	75.0%
> 3 years	37.5%	25.0%

## Appendix B

*Life Interview Protocol* (Text below by McAdams, 2008)

The Life Story Interview  
Dan P. McAdams  
The Foley Center for the Study of Lives  
Northwestern University  
Revised: February, 2008

### **Introduction**

This is an interview about the story of your life. As a social scientist, I am interested in hearing your story, including parts of the past as you remember them and the future as you imagine it. The story is selective; it does not include everything that has ever happened to you. Instead, I will ask you to focus on a few key things in your life – a few key scenes, characters, and ideas. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions. Instead, your task is simply to tell me about some of the most important things that have happened in your life and how you imagine your life developing in the future. I will guide you through the interview so that we finish it all in about two hours or less.

Please know that my purpose in doing this interview is not to figure out what is wrong with you or to do some kind of deep clinical analysis! Nor should you think of this interview as a “therapy session” of some kind. The interview is for research purposes only, and its main goal is simply to hear your story. As social scientists, my colleagues and I collect people’s life stories in order to understand the different ways in which people in our society and in others live their lives and the different ways in which they understand who they are. Everything you say is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

I think you will enjoy the interview. Do you have any questions?

### **A. Life Chapters**

Please begin by thinking about your life as if it were a book or novel. Imagine that the book has a table of contents containing the titles of the main chapters in the story. To begin here, please describe very briefly what the main chapters in the book might be. Please give each chapter a title, tell me just a little bit about what each chapter is about, and say a word or two about how we get from one chapter to the next. As a storyteller here, what you want to do is to give me an overall plot summary of your story, going chapter by chapter. You may have as many chapters as you want, but I would suggest having between about 2 and 7 of them. We will want to spend no more than about 20 minutes on this first section of the interview, so please keep your descriptions of the chapters relatively brief.

[Note to interviewer: The interviewer should feel free to ask questions of clarification and elaboration throughout the interview, but especially in this first part. This first section of the interview should run between 15 and 30 minutes.]

### **B. Key Scenes in the Life Story**

Now that you have described the overall plot outline for your life, I would like you to focus in on a few key scenes that stand out in the story. A key scene would be an event or specific incident that took place at a particular time and place. Consider a key scene to be a moment in your life story that stands out for a particular reason – perhaps because it was especially good or bad, particularly vivid, important, or memorable. For each of the eight key events we will consider, I ask that you describe in detail what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event. In addition, I ask that you tell me why you think this particular scene is important or significant in your life. What does the scene say about you as a person? Please be specific.

**1. High point.** Please describe a scene, episode, or moment in your life that stands out as an especially positive experience. This might be the high point scene of your entire life, or else an especially happy, joyous, exciting, or wonderful moment in the story. Please describe this high point scene in detail. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a word or two about why you think this particular moment was so good and what the scene may say about who you are as a person.

**2. Low point.** The second scene is the opposite of the first. Thinking back over your entire life, please identify a scene that stands out as a low point, if not the low point in your life story. Even though this event is unpleasant, I would appreciate your providing as much detail as you can about it. What happened in the event, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a word or two about why you think this particular moment was so bad and what the scene may say about you or your life. [Interviewer note: If the participants balks at doing this, tell him or her that the event does not really have to be the lowest point in the story but merely a very bad experience of some kind.]

**3. Turning point.** In looking back over your life, it may be possible to identify certain key moments that stand out as turning points -- episodes that marked an important change in you or your life story. Please identify a particular episode in your life story that you now see as a turning point in your life. If you cannot identify a key turning point that stands out clearly, please describe some event in your life wherein you went through an important change of some kind. Again, for this event please describe what happened, where and when, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Also, please say a word or two about what you think this event says about you as a person or about your life.

**4. Positive childhood memory.** The fourth scene is an early memory – from childhood or your teen-aged years – that stands out as especially positive in some way. This would be a very positive, happy memory from your early years. Please describe this good memory in detail. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you or about your life?

**5. Negative childhood memory.** The fifth scene is an early memory – from childhood or your teen-aged years – that stands out as especially negative in some way. This would be a very negative, unhappy memory from your early years, perhaps entailing sadness, fear, or some other very negative emotional experience. Please describe this bad memory in detail. What happened,

where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you or your life?

**6. Vivid adult memory.** Moving ahead to your adult years, please identify one scene that you have not already described in this section (in other words, do not repeat your high point, low point, or turning point scene) that stands out as especially vivid or meaningful. This would be an especially memorable, vivid, or important scene, positive or negative, from your adult years. Please describe this scene in detail, tell what happened, when and where, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Also, what does this memory say about you or your life?

**7. Wisdom event.** Please describe an event in your life in which you displayed wisdom. The episode might be one in which you acted or interacted in an especially wise way or provided wise counsel or advice, made a wise decision, or otherwise behaved in a particularly wise manner. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you and your life?

**8. Religious, spiritual, or mystical experience.** Whether they are religious or not, many people report that they have had experiences in their lives where they felt a sense of the transcendent or sacred, a sense of God or some almighty or ultimate force, or a feeling of oneness with nature, the world, or the universe. Thinking back on your entire life, please identify an episode or moment in which you felt something like this. This might be an experience that occurred within the context of your own religious tradition, if you have one, or it may be a spiritual or mystical experience of any kind. Please describe this transcendent experience in detail. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you or your life?

Now, we're going to talk about the future.

### **C. Future Script**

**1. The next chapter.** Your life story includes key chapters and scenes from your past, as you have described them, and it also includes how you see or imagine your future. February 5, 2007 Please describe what you see to be the next chapter in your life. What is going to come next in your life story?

**2. Dreams, hopes, and plans for the future.** Please describe your plans, dreams, or hopes for the future. What do you hope to accomplish in the future in your life story?

**3. Life project.** Do you have a project in life? A life project is something that you have been working on and plan to work on in the future chapters of your life story. The project might involve your family or your work life, or it might be a hobby, avocation, or pastime. Please describe any project that you are currently working on or plan to work on in the future. Tell me what the project is, how you got involved in the project or will get involved in the project, how the project might develop, and why you think this project is important for you and/or for other people.

Note: The original McAdams protocol continues, but this is the reduced version used in McAdams & Guo (2003).

Appendix C.

*Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 25 (CD-RISC-25) ©*

not true at all (0)	rarely true (1)	sometimes true (2)	often true (3)	true nearly all the time (4)
1.				I am able to adapt when changes occur.
2.				I have at least one close and secure relationship that helps me when I am stressed.
3.				When there are no clear solutions to my problems, sometimes fate or God can help.
4.				I can deal with whatever comes my way.
5.				Past successes give me confidence in dealing with new challenges and difficulties.
6.				I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.
7.				Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.
8.				I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships.
9.				Good or bad, I believe that most things happen for a reason.
10.				I give my best effort no matter what the outcome may be.
11.				I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.
12.				Even when things look hopeless, I don't give up.
13.				During times of stress/crisis, I know where to turn for help.
				Under pressure, I stay focused and think

14. clearly.
15. I prefer to take the lead in solving problems rather than letting others make all the decisions.  
I am not easily discouraged by failure.
- 16.
17. I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.
18. I can make unpopular or difficult decisions that affect other people, if it is necessary.
19. I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.
20. In dealing with life's problems, sometimes you have to act on a hunch without knowing why.
21. I have a strong sense of purpose in life.
22. I feel in control of my life.
23. I like challenges.
24. I work to attain my goals no matter what roadblocks I encounter along the way.
25. I take pride in my achievements.

Appendix D

*Compassion for Self Scale* (Neff, 2003)

**HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES**

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

**Almost  
never**

**Almost  
always**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

Appendix E

*Compassion for Others Scale* (Pommier, 2011)

**Compassion Scale**

**HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS OTHERS**

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

**Almost  
Never**

**Almost  
Always**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

- \_\_\_\_ 1. When people cry in front of me, I often don't feel anything at all.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Sometimes when people talk about their problems, I feel like I don't care.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. I don't feel emotionally connected to people in pain.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. I pay careful attention when other people talk to me.
- \_\_\_\_ 5. I feel detached from others when they tell me their tales of woe.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. If I see someone going through a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. I often tune out when people tell me about their troubles.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. I like to be there for others in times of difficulty.
- \_\_\_\_ 9. I notice when people are upset, even if they don't say anything.
- \_\_\_\_ 10. When I see someone feeling down, I feel like I can't relate to them.
- \_\_\_\_ 11. Everyone feels down sometimes, it is part of being human.
- \_\_\_\_ 12. Sometimes I am cold to others when they are down and out.
- \_\_\_\_ 13. I tend to listen patiently when people tell me their problems.
- \_\_\_\_ 14. I don't concern myself with other people's problems.
- \_\_\_\_ 15. It's important to recognize that all people have weaknesses and no one's perfect.
- \_\_\_\_ 16. My heart goes out to people who are unhappy.
- \_\_\_\_ 17. Despite my differences with others, I know that everyone feels pain just like me.
- \_\_\_\_ 18. When others are feeling troubled, I usually let someone else attend to them.
- \_\_\_\_ 19. I don't think much about the concerns of others.
- \_\_\_\_ 20. Suffering is just a part of the common human experience.

- \_\_\_\_\_21. When people tell me about their problems, I try to keep a balanced perspective on the situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_22. I can't really connect with other people when they're suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_23. I try to avoid people who are experiencing a lot of pain.
- \_\_\_\_\_24. When others feel sadness, I try to comfort them.

Appendix F

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Survey

**Basic Demographic Questions**

1. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your current country of citizenship? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black (Born in Africa)
- Black (Born in the United States)
- Caribbean/West Indian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Middle Eastern
- Another identity. Please specify:

---

I prefer not to respond

5. What is your gender identity?

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender man
- Transgender woman
- Non-binary/Gender fluid
- Another gender identity. Please specify:

---

I prefer not to respond

6. What is your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Gay
- Bisexual or Pansexual
- Asexual
- Other Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- I prefer not to respond

7. Which category best describes your current marital status?

- Never Married
- Married
- Living as Married
- Separated or Divorced
- Widowed

8. Which of the following categories best describes your current employment status?

- Employed, working 1-39 hours per week
- Employed, working 40 or more hours per week
- Not employed, looking for work
- Not employed, NOT looking for work
- Retired
- Disabled, Not able to work

9. What is the highest level of public or private education you have completed?

- Less than a High School degree
- High school degree or equivalent
- Associates degree or a 2 year college completed
- 4 year college attended, but not completed
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree

10. Based on your own judgment, how capable are you of speaking English?

- Very Limited     Limited     Competent     Good     Very Good

11. Based on your own judgment, how capable are you of understanding English spoken orally (aloud)?

- Very Limited     Limited     Competent     Good     Very Good

12. What is the highest level of school your mother (or mother-figure) completed or the highest degree she received?

- Less than a high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (eg. GED)
- Associates degree or a 2 year college completed
- 4 year college attended, but not completed
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree

13. What is the highest level of school your father (or father-figure) completed or the highest degree he received?

- Less than a high school degree

- High school degree or equivalent (eg. GED)
- Associates degree or a 2 year college completed
- 4 year college attended, but not completed
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree

14. What religious affiliation do you hold?

- Baptist – all type
- Protestant
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Pentecostal
- Catholic
- Presbyterian
- Christian non-denominational
- Jewish
- Islamic
- Buddhist
- Other Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

15. How often do you attend religious services?

- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

16. How important is your religion to you?

- Not important
- Somewhat important
- Very important

17. Have you ever been diagnosed by a mental health professional with a psychiatric disorder?

- Yes  No  Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

17a. If Yes, with what were you diagnosed? Check all that apply

- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Anxiety disorder
- Attentional disorder such as ADHD
- Schizophrenia or other psychotic disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

18. Have you ever received a diagnosis of substance abuse or dependence?

- Yes  No  Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

18a. If yes please list all relevant substances:

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Heroin
- Prescription Opioids such as Oxycodone
- Crack/cocaine
- Methamphetamine or crystal methamphetamine
- K2 or “synthetic marijuana”
- Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

19. Have you ever felt that you had a problem with the use of a substance (i.e. using a substance was negatively impacting your life but you found it difficult to reduce or stop use)?

- Yes  No  Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

19a. If yes please list all relevant substances:

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Heroin
- Prescription Opioids such as Oxycodone
- Crack/cocaine
- Methamphetamine or crystal methamphetamine
- K2 or “synthetic marijuana”
- Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Incarceration History**

20. How much total time have you served in a state or federal prison?

\_\_\_\_\_

21. How long ago were you most recently released from a state or federal prison?

\_\_\_\_\_

22. During your most recent incarceration in a state or federal prison, how much time were you sentenced to serve? \_\_\_\_\_

23. During your most recent incarceration in a state or federal prison, how much time did you actually serve? \_\_\_\_\_

24. For what offenses were you convicted that led to your most recent period of incarceration?

Offense 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Offense 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Offense 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Offense 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Offense 5 \_\_\_\_\_

25. Are you currently on parole?

Yes

No

25a. If Yes, when do you anticipate the termination of your parole period?

\_\_\_\_\_

26. During your most recent period of incarceration (while still in prison), have you participated in:

A. The Coming to Terms Curriculum to discuss the factors that led to the crime for which you were convicted?  Yes  No

B. Employment counseling (including how to find a job or interviewing skills)?  Yes  No

C. Classes in parenting or child rearing skills?  Yes  No

D. Classes in life skills and community adjustment including anger management, conflict resolution, personal finance, or other life skills?  Yes  No

E. Drug or alcohol groups (for example, Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous, or other drug or alcohol-related groups)?  Yes  No

F. Inmate assistance groups, for example, inmate liaison, advisory, or workers' councils?  Yes  No

G. A religious study group?  Yes  No

H. An ethnic/racial organization (for example, NAACP, African-American or Black Culture group, Hispanic Committee, Aztlan, or Lakota)?  Yes  No

I. Any other programs or groups?  Yes  No Specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

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