

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Formerly Incarcerated Latinxs' Perspectives on the
Psychological Impact of Incarceration & Reintegration: The Impacts of Trauma, Identity, and
Culture on Transition

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology

by

María D. Vázquez

Committee in charge:

Professor Melissa L. Morgan, Chair

Professor Alison Cerezo

Professor Andrés J. Consoli

September 2021

The dissertation of Maria D. Vazquez is approved.

Alison Cerezo

Andrés J. Consoli

Melissa L. Morgan, Committee Chair

March 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my immense gratitude for the community of people, family, friends, chosen family, confidants, and supporters that were always in my corner, for all of their support, patience, and love. It's been a wild ride for all of us! My completion of this dissertation and earning of a doctorate is as much a result of my hard work and tears, as it is a result of theirs. This achievement stands on the shoulders of many that came before me: those women, scholars, thinkers, advocates, and fighters that made it possible for me to go to graduate school and reach the heights I have reached.

I would like to thank all those educators and supporters that made sure I believed in myself and in what I was capable of throughout my education. Those that taught me, pushed me, and praised me. Those that believed in me even when I did not believe in myself—when I let myself believe that I was too loud, too ambitious, too picky, too much, and simultaneously, too little, to be who I wanted to be. I'd like to thank those scholars, educators, counselors, and staff at Boston College that supported me, challenged me, taught me, and made research something more than just a Google search. I'd like to thank the McNair program, specifically Chasneika Astacio, who made sure that I never wavered from my goal of a PhD, even from 3,000 miles away.

I would like to thank Dr. Melissa L. Morgan who recruited me as her advisee in the Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology department at University of California, Santa Barbara and recommended me for the fellowship that made it possible to move 3,000 miles from all I knew on the East Coast to the beautiful beaches of Santa Barbara.

To Dr. Steve Smith, that listened to me as I ranted, as I screamed, as I was overwhelmed with anger, frustration, exhaustion, and isolation. Who was always willing to meet and offer his real, no fuss, hard but needed advice. You gave me perspective and a reality check whenever I needed it. I thank you. You are one of the only reasons I was able to make it through this program. You made sure I didn't let anything get in the way of my degree. This was a hard road, a painful road, a long road, but one that I was able to walk because of you. Thank you.

To the many staff that I had the pleasure to work alongside with at UCSB, that helped me make it through graduate school in one way or another, I am grateful for all you did, big and small to get me to where I am today.

To Sergio, who should get an honorary degree for all he's been through these past 6 years, you were by my side, whether physically or emotionally, through every single step of my journey. You are probably THE ultimate person to thank in this. You knew way too much about the ins and outs of my life in graduate school, the drama, the frustrations, the triumphs, the ridiculousness, and the politics, for someone who very intentionally decided not to do this himself. You kept me tied to the real world, to the real me, to humor, to joy, to the beauty of life. You were my rock throughout these years and I couldn't have done any of this without you (maybe I could have but I would have been quite miserable and sad doing it). I love you. I'm blessed to have you.

To Adriana, Gigi, Ana, Danny, Andy, Mayte, Fatima, Noreen...(I can keep going but I'm guessing there's a word limit to these things—I'm grateful that I can keep going on that list and fill up pages and pages of people who carried me emotionally, socially, professionally, lovingly, through this degree. Even if you're not on that list, you're in that ellipses boo). I really don't think that words can even begin to capture how grateful I am for

every single one of you, for all the times you loved me, held me, cared for me, reminded me of who I was, told me to keep going, told me to slow down, kept me in check, ate with me, danced with me, laughed with me, listened to me, and honored me. This is possible because of you all and I am so glad life brought us together.

To the Underground Scholars, the formerly and currently incarcerated folks that took me in, supported me, pushed me, forced me to grow and learn and advocate more than I ever did before. Thank you for making this degree possible. Thank you for co-signing me, for sharing my calls, for welcoming me, for giving me a purpose to my work and my degree greater than any accolade and a few letters after my name ever could. For every single one of my participants, both for this study and that of my pre-dissertation project, thank you for trusting me with your life stories. Thank you for sharing the most vulnerable parts of you, even as they're still healing.

To my family: Mami, Papi, Mily, Chupiz, Anibal, Joel, Kailyn...(that's another list of too many people and their babies that will break this word limit), thank you for your patience with me even as I navigated something that you didn't understand—even as I was an emotional mess, distant, too busy, irritable, tired, and far away. Thank you for always reminding me that I'm still a nerd and that above all, I'm still and always will be, your daughter and sister. I am immensely grateful to you all. This is for all of us. This is for you.

María D. Vázquez
University of California, Santa Barbara
mvazquez@ucsb.edu

EDUCATION

Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology – Ph.D. September 2021
Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara

Counseling Psychology – M.A. June 2017
Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara

Applied Psychology and Human Development – B.A. May 2015
Lynch School of Education, Boston College

Sociology – B.A. May 2015
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, Boston College

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Intern in Health Service Psychology, Counseling and Psychological Services
(CAPS) (8/2020-7/2021)
University of Houston, Houston, TX

- provide short-term psychodynamic, relational, cognitive-behavioral (CBT), and dialectical-behavioral (DBT) treatment to students exhibiting a variety of psychiatric and psychological concerns across the spectrum of acuity (i.e. severe mental illness (Bipolar II, OCD) to adjustment disorders)
- conduct crisis and risk assessments, as well as intake evaluations as consultant on duty for students, faculty, and staff presenting in crisis or requesting connection to mental health services
- co-lead 1-2 Understanding Self and Others process groups for graduate and undergraduate students
- conduct outreach to campus community by way of workshop development and presentation on mental health topics (including but not limited to: racial, community, and intergenerational trauma, intimate partner violence, coping skills, self-soothing practices, etc.)
- training and supervision of advanced doctoral practicum student clinicians providing short-term, individualized & group therapy to undergraduate student clients
- create training for agency clinicians and student affairs staff for working with formerly incarcerated and system-impacted students as well as survivors of human trafficking

Assessment Specialist, Child Abuse and Learning Meditation (CALM) (7/2019- 6/2020)
Santa Barbara, CA

- Score and interpret a variety of self, parent, and clinician report assessments in English and/or Spanish and provide appropriate treatment recommendations to

clinicians working with children, youth, and families experiencing a trauma, abuse, or otherwise at risk and referred to treatment by community and public social services. Assessments include the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), Youth Self-Report (YSR), the Parenting Stress Index (PSI), Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI), the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), and Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory-2 (AAPI-2), among others.

Doctoral Student Clinician, Counseling and Psychological Services (9/2018- 6/2018)
University of California, Santa Barbara, CA

- Conducted intakes and provided individual brief psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral (CBT), dialectical behavioral (DBT), and mindfulness based therapy (MBT) for college students diagnosed with a variety of presenting problems: anxiety, depression, self-esteem issues, adjustment difficulties, trauma-related distress and disorders, interpersonal violence, cultural identity issues, and gender/sexuality issues.
- Carried a caseload of up to 15 university students seen on a biweekly basis, and two students seen weekly given greater clinical need.

Bilingual Assessment Clinician, Psychological Assessment Clinic (1/2018- 6/2018)
Hosford Counseling and Psychological Services Clinic, Santa Barbara, CA

- Administer complete neuropsychological assessments in both English and Spanish to children, young adults, and local community members referred for psychological assessment and/or seeking diagnostic or treatment clarity and recommendations
- Administer individual, collateral, and family structured and unstructured interviews for the purposes of completing neuropsychological evaluations
- Provide feedback sessions and integrated reports to referral sources and families in need of service and diagnostic recommendations

Counseling & Assessment Clinician, Juvenile Justice Facility (7/2017- 8/2018)
Ventura County Behavioral Health, Oxnard, CA

- provide bilingual individualized services (time-limited interpersonal therapy (IPT), cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical-behavioral therapy (DBT), and motivational interviewing (MI), to incarcerated youth and their families experiencing a wide-range of psychiatric and psychological conditions related to community, sexual, immigration, and familial trauma, substance use, gang-involvement, and human trafficking
- provide group therapy to youth following Seeking Safety and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) principles
- collaborate on interdisciplinary team that included probation staff, corrections officers, and teachers to develop approaches to best support youth while at the facility
- conduct crisis and risk assessments in consultation with licensed supervisors for incoming youth deemed as suicidal, homicidal, or otherwise at-risk during booking and intake
- serve as liaison for Spanish-speaking parents, guardians, and advocates seeking services for incarcerated youth and their families while in custody

- provide case management services for current and past clients (facilitate transfers to community mental health clinics, program matriculation, access to insurance, housing, etc.)

Bilingual Clinician (9/2016- 9/2017)

Hosford Counseling and Psychological Services Clinic, Santa Barbara, CA

- Managed a caseload of up to five clients per week providing individual, family, and couples psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral (CBT) therapy, predominantly to Spanish-speaking immigrants and/or Latinx individuals
- Conducted intake interviews and assessments with incoming clients (children, adolescents, adults, and families) for diagnostic and individualized treatment planning purposes
- Received weekly supervision in English (group) and Spanish (individual)
- Provide Spanish translation services to clinicians, clients, and prospective clients and their families
- Engaged in bilingual outreach efforts to Santa Barbara community, through various community events and workshop opportunities

Counseling Intern (6/2013-8/2013)

Spanish Institute for Psychiatric Research, Madrid, Spain

- Administered psychiatric and psychological diagnostic assessments to determine most effective treatment plans for patients exhibiting a variety of personality and behavioral disorders and seeking psychiatric treatment as part of an intensive outpatient program (IOP)
- Assisted patients in completing individual and self-report assessments; observed and occasionally co-led psychotherapy sessions with patients and/or their families
- Administered preliminary individual and family interviews and counseling before meeting with treating psychiatrist
- Briefed patients on diagnostic assessments and check-ins as needed

TRAININGS COMPLETED

- Treating and Preventing Post-Traumatic Stress in First-Responders: Putting PTSD Out of Business, *PsychAlive* (April 2021)
- Somatic Experiencing for the Treatment of Trauma-Related and Eating Disorders, *University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services* (March 2021)
- ExtraOrdinary Relationships in Relationship and Couples Counseling: Working with Gender, Sexual and Romantic Minorities, *University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services* (March 2021)
- Working with Sexuality, Sexual Identity, & Sexual Dysfunction, *University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services* (March 2021)
- The Process and Art of Effective Suicide and Risk Assessment, *University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services* (January 2021)
- Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) with Individuals and Couples, *University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services* (December 2020)
- Clinical Strategies for Working with Youth Racial Stress & Trauma, *Multidisciplinary Mental Health Summit* (December 2020)

- Assessment and Clinical Service to Survivors of Human Trafficking, *Houston CHATS* (November 2020)
- Adapting Dialectical-Behavioral Therapy (DBT) with Spanish-Speaking and Latinx Communities: *National Hispanic and Latino Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network* (August 2020)
- Intersection of Racism, Discrimination and Mental Health in Communities of Color, *National Hispanic and Latino Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network* (August 2020)
- Black Mental Health: Working with Black Populations and Centralizing an Anti-Racism Framework, *PsychAlive* (August 2020)
- Psychological First-Aid, *Santa Barbara Response Network* (September 2016; June 2018; March 2020)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Monthly Training & Supervision, *Ventura County Behavioral Health* (July 2017-August 2018)
- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), *Ventura County Behavioral Health* (March 2018)
- Gottman Couples Therapy Level I Training, *UC Santa Barbara* (October 2017)

TRAININGS CONDUCTED & INVITED TALKS

Vázquez, M.D. (2020, February). *Clinical Practice with Formerly Incarcerated or System-Impacted Individuals*. University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services, Houston, TX.

Vázquez, M.D. (2019, March; 2018, August; 2017, May; 2016, October). *Trauma-Informed Wellness & Mental Health Awareness for Resource or Foster Parents* (English & Spanish). Santa Barbara Department of Social Services, Santa Maria, CA.

Vázquez, M.D. (2018, March). *Multicultural and Diversity Issues in Applied Psychology: Considerations and Research Conducted*. Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology, CNCSP 102: Research Methods in Applied Psychology, Santa Barbara, CA.

Vázquez, M.D. (2018, January). *Infusing Culturally-Sanctioned Spiritual and Indigenous Healing in Clinical Practice with Latinx and/or Spanish-Speaking Clients*. Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology, Santa Barbara, CA.

Vázquez, M.D. (2017, September). *Radical self-care and the politics of self-love for student and community activists*. MultiCultural Center, University of California Student Leadership Retreat, Casa de Maria, Montecito, CA.

Vázquez, M.D. (2017, January). *Diversity & inclusion in business training*. Keene Advisors, Boston, MA.

SCHOLARSHIP

GRANTS AND FUNDING AWARDS

Vázquez, M.D. (2019). *Dissertation Grant*. Chicano Studies Institute, University of California, Riverside (funded for \$2000).

Vázquez, M.D. (2017). *UC MEXUS Student and Postdoctoral Research Small Grant*. Institute for Mexico and the United States, University of California, Riverside (funded for \$1300).

Vázquez, M.D. (2015-2019). *Doctoral Scholars Fellowship*. Graduate Division, University of California, Santa Barbara (funded for 4 years total: \$164000).

Vázquez, M.D. (2015). *Frontier Fellowship*. Research Support Grant. Montserrat Coalition, Boston College (funded for \$3000).

Vázquez, M.D. (2015). *Karen Campbell Severin Book Award*. Thea Bowman AHANA & Intercultural Center, Boston College (funded for \$500).

Vázquez, M.D. (2014). *Cynthia J. Sullivan Scholarship*. Senior Year Support Award. Lynch School of Education, Boston College (funded for \$25000).

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

Morgan-Consoli, M.L., Torres, L., Unzueta, E., Meza, D., Sanchez, A., **Vázquez, M.D.**, & Hufana, A. (2020). Accounts of thriving in the face of discrimination for Latina/o undergraduate students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1-15.

Morgan-Consoli, M.L., Consoli, A.J., Hufana, A., Sanchez, A., Unzueta, E., Flores, I., **Vázquez, M.D.**, Sheltzer, J.M., & Casas, J.M. (2018). “I feel like we’re going backwards”: Post-presidential election resilience in Latinx community members. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology*. 10(2), 16-33.

Vázquez, M.D. (2015). Latino masculinity: Underlying factor in college persistence levels in sample of thirteen college-aged Latino men in greater Boston area. *Social Eyes*. 6, 55-66.

IN PREPARATION

Vázquez, M.D., & Morgan-Consoli, M. L. Overcoming incarceration: Stories of resilience and thriving in formerly incarcerated Latino men in college. Manuscript in Preparation.

Whaling, K., **Vázquez, M.D.**, Vanegas Martínez, G., & Plunkett, S. (submitted). Familial risk and protective factors on depression in Latina/o college students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Sánchez, A., Hufana, A., **Vázquez, M. D.**, Morgan Consoli, M. L., Consoli, A. J., Casas, M. J., Vanegas, G., Sheltzer, J., Meza, D., & Unzueta, E. (2017). Post-election reactions of Latinx community members in Santa Barbara. Diversity Forum Newsletter, University of California, Santa Barbara.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Morgan-Consoli, M.L., Franco, V., Felix, E., Hufana, A., Sanchez, A., & **Vázquez, M.D.** (2020). Steps to developing a CBPR collaboration: Resilience among Latinx youth. Counseling Psychology Virtual Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Vázquez, M.D., Morgan-Consoli, M.L. (2018, October). *Overcoming incarceration: Stories of resilience and thriving in formerly incarcerated Latino men in college*. Poster to be presented at National Latina/o Psychological Association Conference, San Diego, CA.

Vázquez, M.D., Sanchez, A., Flores, I., Hufana, A., Unzueta, E., Sheltzer, J., Meza, D., Morgan-Consoli, M.L., Consoli, A.J., & Casas, J.M. (2018, August). *Resilience in Latina/o/x community post-Trump election: Themes and considerations*. Poster to be presented at American Psychological Association 2018 Convention, San Francisco, CA.

Vázquez, M.D., Morgan-Consoli, M.L. (2017, October). *Preliminary findings from a qualitative study of resilience and thriving in formerly incarcerated Latino males*. Poster presented at Boston College's Diversity Challenge Conference, Chestnut Hill, MA.

Vázquez, M.D., Whaling, K., Vanegas Martinez, G., & Plunkett, S.W. (2017, April). *Familial risk and protective factors on depression in Latino emerging adults*. Poster presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Child Development, Austin, TX.

Vázquez, M.D. (2017, March). *Latino masculinity: Underlying factor in college persistence levels in sample of thirteen college-aged Latino men*. Paper presented at the Society for Cross-Cultural Research, New Orleans, LA.

Torres, L., Morgan Consoli, M.L., Meza, D., **Vázquez, M.D.**, Sanchez, A., Najar, N.S., Unzueta, E., Mata-Greve, F. (2016, September). *Latino/a thriving in the face of discrimination: A mixed methods approach*. Symposia presented at National Latina/o Psychological Association. Orlando, FL.

Unzueta, E., Morgan-Consoli, M.L., Meza, D., **Vázquez, M.D.**, & Sanchez, A. (2016, September). *Case studies of unauthorized students and resilience: Implications for social justice*. Paper presented at the National Latina/o Psychological Association Biennial Conference. Orlando, FL.

Buhin, L., Morgan Consoli, M.L., Grubisic, T., Macukic, F., Masic, R., Meza, D., Unzueta, E., **Vázquez, M.D.** (2016, August). *Thoughts on resilience and adversity from Croatian and U.S. Latino/a students: A qualitative study*. Poster presented at American Psychological Association 2016 Convention, Denver, CO.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Unzueta, E., Morgan Consoli, M.L., Katz, D., Sanchez, A., Meza, D., **Vázquez, M.D.**, Hufana, A. (2017, July). *Latino/a thriving and resilience assessment scale (LTRAS): Scale construction from a social justice perspective*. Presented at Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología, Mérida, MX.

REGIONAL, STATE, & OTHER CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Vázquez, M.D. (2017, April). *Growing in the struggle: An exploration of post-traumatic growth and thriving*. Presented at University of California, Santa Barbara Mental Health Conference, Santa Barbara, CA.

Vázquez, M.D., Carlson, C., Hudson, J. (2016, March). *Mental health & activism*. Presented at Social Justice Development Day Conference for the Office of Housing and Residential Services, Santa Barbara, CA.

Vázquez, M.D. (2015, May). *Latino men and their emotional support networks*. Presented at Community Research Program Research Symposium, Boston, MA.

Vázquez, M.D. (2015, January). *Latino masculinity: Underlying factor in college persistence levels in sample of thirteen college-aged Latino men in greater Boston area*. Poster presentation at Boston College Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium, Boston, MA.

Vázquez, M.D. (2014, August). *Latino masculinity: Underlying factor in college persistence levels in sample of thirteen college-aged Latino men in greater Boston area*. Presented at Boston College Annual McNair Summer Research Symposium, Boston, MA.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Principal Researcher (2018-present)

The Psychological Effects of Incarceration on the Mental Health and Reintegration of Formerly Incarcerated Latinx

- Conducted qualitative study on the psychological and mental health impacts of incarceration on the reintegration experiences and process for formerly incarcerated Latinx confined for more than a year between 2015-2020
- Funded by the University of California Chicano Studies Institute (CSI)

Wellness Coordinator (2016-2019)

Santa Barbara Wellness Project, Santa Barbara County, CA

- Serve as liaison and direct point of contact for community members and partners
- Present wellness curriculum based on suicide prevention, wellness, and community research to community groups, agencies, and county officials in either English or Spanish
- Lead informed consent and assent procedures, data collection, and analysis
- Co-lead bilingual train the trainer sessions for community members interested in becoming trained presenters

- Supervise team of undergraduate research assistants in research, writing, and community outreach efforts
- Assess and pursue grant opportunities from local, state, and national funding sources

Principal Researcher (2015-present)

Resilience/Thriving among Formerly Incarcerated Latino Men in College

- Conducted state-wide qualitative study on formerly incarcerated Latino who are currently enrolled in an institution of higher education and who have been incarcerated for a period of six months or more at some point in their lives
- Funded by the University of California Institute for Mexico and the United States (UC MEXUS)

Graduate Research Assistant (2015-2020)

Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA

- Collaborated on several qualitative and mixed-method projects from conceptualization to publication with Dr. Morgan-Consoli's team that focused on resilience, thriving, and their effects on Latinx mental health.

Ronald E. McNair Scholar (2013-2015)

Learning to Learn Office, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA

- Studied the influence of Latino masculinity and help-seeking behaviors on college persistence levels among Latino men through designing and implementing a qualitative research project.
- Conducted literature review, thirteen interviews, transcriptions, and completed write-up independently.
- Presented results at the 2014 McNair Research Symposium as well as the 2015 Boston College Winter Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Research Assistant, Experience, Reflection, and Action Seminar (2013-2015)

Lynch School of Education, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA

- Contributed to quantitative research that focused on first-year college students' development of moral-cognitive decision making skills by assisting in data collection and input into Excel spreadsheet that was later additionally coded and analyzed using statistical software.

Research Scholar, Community Research Program (2014-2015)

Thea Bowman AHANA and Intercultural Center, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA

- Designed, developed, and conducted qualitative study exploring how cultural understandings of Latino masculinity and formal mental health services affect rates of formal help-seeking among college-aged Latino men.
- Conducted literature review, chose and designed research plan, and independently conducted interviews, transcribed, and analyzed qualitative data.
- Presented findings at the 2014 Community Research Program Research Symposium.

Research Assistant, Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology (2014-2015)

Lynch School of Education, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA

- Contributed to research that explored the moderating effects of stereotypes, family expectation, and peer networks on help-seeking and mental health outcomes in a national sample of Asian-American college students.
- Collaborated with a team in conducting literature review; developed research questions, identified appropriate variables and measures, led recruitment efforts, and helped design assigned survey segments.

Research Intern (2013)

Spanish Institute for Psychiatric Research, Madrid, Spain

- Administered psychiatric and psychological diagnostic assessments that helped determine most effective treatment plans for patients exhibiting a variety of personality and behavioral disorders
- Collected, coded, organized and entered data into Excel and statistical software for analysis
- Organized, filed, retrieved, and maintained confidential patient information
- Translated questionnaires, patient and hospital correspondence, grant and research proposals

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Remote Support Teaching Assistant (4/2020-9/2020)

Graduate Division & Instructional Development, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA

- Provided support to faculty and instructors of record in the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology during the transition to remote learning in the Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 given COVID-19 related restrictions
- Collaborated with faculty and instructors of record to identify virtual and remote tools to meet instructional goals and needs
- Provide department-wide on-call technological and remote tool support to faculty, instructors of record, and graduate teaching assistants
- Facilitated the development of online course management system sites, student assessment tools, and project sites, for up to fifteen graduate and undergraduate level courses

Graduate Teaching Assistant (1/2020- 3/2020)

Department of Black Studies, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA

- Created course content and led discussions and activities for three sections of 65 total undergraduate students for *History of Jazz* course, using critical race theory and liberation pedagogy as guiding frameworks
- Provided one-on-one mentorship and support services in academic and professional topics

Graduate Teaching Assistant (2018-2019)

Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA

- *CNCSP 102: Research Methods in Applied Psychology* (Fall 2018)
- *CNCSP 101: Introduction to Applied Psychology* (Winter 2019)
- *CNCSP 112: Positive Psychology: Theory and Practice* (Spring 2019)

- Created course content and led discussions and activities for four sections of 130 total undergraduate students (in each quarter)
- Provided one-on-one mentorship and support services in academic and professional topics

Graduate Teaching Assistant (2016-2017)

Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA

- *CNCSP 114: Psychology of Gender* (Spring 2017)
- *CNCSP 101: Introduction to Applied Psychology* (Winter 2017)
- *CNCSP 110: Introduction to Educational and Vocational Guidance* (Fall 2016)
- Created course content and led discussions and activities for four sections of undergraduate students (up to 96 students at one time in each quarter)
- Graded written assignments, as well as midterm and final examinations; collaborated on creation of rubrics and other grading metrics
- Provided one-on-one mentorship and support services in academic and professional topics

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (2013-2015)

Lynch School of Education, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA

- Assisted with the Experience, Reflection, and Action Seminar course that all first year students in the Lynch School of Education are required to complete
- Supervised six teaching assistants as a returning teaching assistant (Fall 2014-Spring 2015)
- Lectured on course materials, led group discussions, and held tutoring sessions
- Graded reflection papers, presentations, and homework assignments
- Held office hours, helped plan workshops, and mentored students

SKILLS

- Native Oral and Written Proficiency in Spanish
- Trained in academic and career counseling, mandated reporting, working with commercially and sexually exploited youth, formerly incarcerated and system-impacted individuals
- Professional and academic mentorship of first generation college students, students of color, or students from otherwise marginalized backgrounds and underrepresented identities (i.e. formerly incarcerated students)
- Knowledgeable in *SPSS* (statistics software), *Qualtrics* (online survey), *nVivo* (qualitative data coding software), *ExpressScribe* (transcription software), *PnC* (HIPAA compliant clinical records software), *Avatar* (HIPAA compliant clinical records software)
- Knowledgeable in online course management systems (e.g., *Blackboard*, *Canvas*, *Gauchospace*)

ACTIVITIES

PROFESSIONAL

- **Reviewer & Reference Editor.** The Glendon Association (2017-present)
- American Psychological Association (2015-present)
 - Division 9: Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

- **Reviewer.** Division Programming Submissions for Annual Convention (2021)
- Division 17: Society of Counseling Psychology
 - **Associate Editor.** The Diversity Factor Newsletter, Section on Ethnic and Racial Diversity (2016)
- Division 35: Society for the Psychology of Women
 - Concerns of Hispanic Women/Latinas
- Division 45: Society for Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race
- **Committee Member for the Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Diversity**, American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (2016-2019)
- **Volunteer.** Resource Room for Persons with Disabilities, APA 2016 Convention.
- National Latina/o Psychological Association (2015-present)
 - National Latina/o Psychological Association Immigration Taskforce for 2018 Conferencia
- American Sociological Association (2012- present)

UNIVERSITY

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce, Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology (2020) – UCSB
- Black Lives Matter Ad-Hoc Department Statement Committee, Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology (2020) – UCSB
- Associated Students Diversity Committee, Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology (2017-2020) – UCSB
- Graduate Curriculum Committee, Department of Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology (2016-2017) – UCSB
- Student Advocacy Committee, Residential & Community Living (2017-2018) – UCSB
- Graduate Scholars Program, Graduate Division (2016-present) – UCSB
- Graduate Residential Assistant, Residential & Community Living (2016 to present) – UCSB
- Secretary of the Graduate Student Apartment Community Council (2015-2016) – UCSB
- Representative for Castaic Village in the Graduate Apartment Community Council (2015) – UCSB
- University Graduate Student Representative at the Student of Color Conference at UC Berkeley (2015) – UCSB
- Preceptor at Opportunities Through Education Summer Program (2015) – BC
- Invited Panelist for Post-Graduation Pathways at Lynch School of Education (2015) – BC
- Invited Panelist for Culture and the LGBTQ Experience (2015) – BC
- Presidential Representative at Raíces de Esperanza National Cuban-American Student Leaders Conference (2015)—UPENN
- President of the Cuban-American Student Association (2014-2015) – BC
- Mentor at El Principio Latina/o Mentorship Program (2014-2015) – BC
- Diversity Resources Assistant at the Career Center (2014-2015) – BC
- Undergraduate & Graduate Tutor for Psychology, Writing, & Sociology (2014-2015) – BC
- Invited Panelist for First-Year Experience at Lynch School of Education (2014) – BC
- Culture Club Representative for the AHANA Leadership Council (2013-2014) – BC
- Executive Member of UGBC Dining Imperative Advisory Committee (2012) – BC
- Executive Board Member of Cuban-American Student Association (2011-2015) – BC

COMMUNITY

- College-Bound Mentor at Santa Barbara School of Squash, CA (2015-2017)
- Boston College 4Boston Volunteer at Jackson Mann Preschool in Brighton, MA (2012-2013)
- Appalachia Volunteers of Boston College at Hollywood, SC (2012-2013)
- Reception Volunteer Organizer for the Green Brush Asian Art Auction for The Asian Services Fund at Quincy Medical Center, MA (2010-2011)
- Student Volunteer at Interfaith Food Pantry, Quincy, MA (2009-2011)

HONORS & AWARDS

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- Boston College Dean's List (2011-2015)

ABSTRACT

Formerly Incarcerated Latinxs' Perspectives on the Psychological Impact of Incarceration &

Reintegration

by

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Racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, with individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latinx accounting for over 40% of those incarcerated in U.S. federal prisons. Extant research on the psychological impacts of incarceration and their potential impacts on the reintegration experiences and successes of formerly incarcerated individuals is limited, and even less research specifically focuses on individuals who are Latinx and formerly incarcerated. The purpose of the present study was to contribute to the literature on the psychological effects of incarceration on reintegration for Latinx individuals, as well as explore the potential role that culture and psychological factors play in formerly incarcerated Latinxs' efforts to reintegrate. Using a qualitative, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method, the following study presents findings from interviews with five formerly incarcerated Latinx individuals. Results are presented as individual participant narratives and later organized into themes, which include: (1) *Psychological Impacts of Incarceration*, (2) *Effects on Reintegration*, (3) *Experiences with Support Services*, and (4) *Role of Cultural and Social Identities*. Findings suggest that the psychological impacts of incarceration are individually and interpersonally constructed, through the lenses of culture and identity. Discussion of findings, suggestions for future research, as well as the implications of findings for clinicians, educators and advocates, are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. has the largest incarcerated population in the world, with over 2.3 million people in adult jails and prisons (Wagner & Sawyer, 2018). Incarceration is well-known as a psychologically taxing experience; the negative effects of which have been documented throughout history in the memoirs, autobiographies, and written work of those that have lived through it (De Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833; Cleaver, 1968; DeVaux, 2013), as well as in social and psychological research (Briere et al., 2016; Dmitrieva et al., 2012; Fazel et al., 2008; Fazel et al., 2016; Haney, 2002; 2003; 2012; 2017; 2018; Lambie & Randall, 2013; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012; MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1985; Rocheleau, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker, & Massoglia, 2015; Sykes, 1958/2007; Wildeman et al., 2014; Wolf & Shi, 2012; Yang et al., 2009).

Latinxs¹ are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, and despite being only 17% of the U.S. population (Stepler & Brown, 2016), account for over 40% of federal inmates (Nellis, 2016; Lopez & Light, 2009). Latinxs are at a greater risk of engagement in the criminal justice system given higher levels of poverty (Gradín, 2012), the growing criminalization of immigration (Isom Scott, 2017; Provine, 2013), and over-policing in communities with high Latinx populations (Rios, 2007; Rios, 2011). Latinx and Black individuals are also more likely to be arrested and incarcerated than their white peers (Andiloro et al., 2014). Given the enormous numbers of incarcerated people in this country, the more than 600,000 people who are released from prison every year (Wagner & Sawyer,

¹ The term Latinx will be used throughout the following chapters to describe individuals who were born in or can trace their cultural or ethnic background to Latin America (Salinas Jr. & Lozano, 2017). It is a term used to encapsulate individuals who identify as women (-a), non-binary (-e or -x), and/or men (-o), and can be used as both a singular and plural noun as well as an adjective (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019).

2018), and the overrepresentation of Latinxs in the carceral system (Nellis, 2016; Lopez & Light, 2009), it is important to explore the effects that mass incarceration has on Latinx populations, their ability to transition back to society once they have served their sentences, and the effects on the communities to which they return.

Psychological Effects of Incarceration

Researchers have long reported that many incarcerated individuals suffer from varied psychological conditions (Haugebrook et al., 2010; Fazel et al., 2008; Fazel et al., 2016; Loper & Levitt, 2011; Reingle Gonzalez & Connell, 2014; Yang et al., 2009; Yi et al., 2017). While much psychopathology exists for people before being incarcerated, many psychological issues arise due to the adaptations necessary for survival in the modern prison system. These issues have been shown to often occur outside of the person's awareness, and do not become conscious until after release (Haney, 2012). Such psychological changes have impacts on how individuals reintegrate back to their communities, families, and lives (Haney, 2012; Liem & Kunst, 2013).

There is a considerable lack of research on what the reintegration process is like for Latinx individuals, specifically, what the psychological impacts of incarceration are for this group, as well as how Latinxs are able to navigate these effects during reintegration, given their sizable representation in the criminal justice system. Even less research centers the voices and lived experiences of formerly incarcerated people to better understand their perceptions of the psychological effects of such experiences and how they conceptualize these experiences as affecting their abilities to reincorporate into their communities. It is important to have a greater understanding of the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated Latinxs, in their own voice, in order to better manage the effects of the over-incarceration

and criminalization of these communities, and potentially gain a better understanding of how to support and advocate for this growing segment of our society.

Background of the Problem

Incarceration is a difficult experience and the psychological effects that may result from imprisonment are numerous (DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2012; Liem & Kunst, 2013). The earliest documentation of the negative emotional consequences of confinement are linked to the first penitentiaries in the United States in the 18th century (Cleaver, 1968; De Beaumont & De Tocqueville, 1833; Lynch, 2012). While psychological research on incarceration has existed for quite some time, much of the research focused on identifying markers of criminality (Bierie & Mann, 2017; Erwin et al., 2000; Hess & Weiner, 1999) and providing prevalence and descriptive statistics of mental illness within the incarcerated population (Daquin & Daigle, 2018; Fazel et al., 2016). Recently, more research has been focused on the psychological effects that may be directly induced or exacerbated by imprisonment (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). There is less in the literature that details the psychological effects of incarceration for some of the most impacted in the U.S., communities of color, including individuals that identify as Latinx.

Some researchers have suggested that the psychological effects of incarceration may be a contributing factor to high rates of recidivism (Haney, 2002; 2012; 2017; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015), a particular problem for formerly incarcerated Latinxs (McGovern et al., 2009). The often-devastating consequences of incarceration are compounded by the psychological challenges inherent to confinement and reintegration, making coping with the stigma of a conviction, the limited access to social resources, and socioemotional isolation that results from a criminal record that much more

difficult to manage (Haney, 2002; 2012; 2017; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). For Latinx individuals, who may already be criminalized because of perceived undocumented status (Isom Scott, 2017; Provine, 2013) and discriminated against based on their social group memberships (Provine, 2013; Nichols et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2012), the process of reintegration and the necessary management of the psychological impacts of incarceration, may be particularly challenging.

More research is needed to explore the extent of the psychological issues that may develop in formerly incarcerated Latinxs during incarceration and reintegration. The perceptions of formerly incarcerated Latinxs themselves is particularly relevant, given the value of their personal experiences and insights into this process, and the lack of extant research with this focus.

Current Study

The purpose of the present study is to contribute to the existing literature on the psychological effects of incarceration on reintegration for Latinxs and the perceived effects of these impacts on their efforts to reintegrate. The present study provides a detailed, in-depth examination of the psychological impacts of incarceration from the perspective of formerly incarcerated Latinx people.

Exploring the perceived socioemotional effects of incarceration from the perspective of those experiencing it may provide valuable insight into how formerly incarcerated Latinxs adapt to imprisonment, the psychological issues that arise or worsen during this experience, and the ways they are able to navigate these during reintegration. The intent of the current study was to thoroughly explore, via formerly incarcerated Latinxs, what meanings they ascribed to the psychological consequences of incarceration, its effects on their efforts to

reintegrate, and what helped them navigate this challenging process, in efforts to better grasp the nuances of this experience for Latinxs and gain a deeper appreciation for the needs, challenges, and resilience of this group.

Research Questions

The study explores the following research questions:

1. How do formerly incarcerated Latinxs describe the psychological impacts of incarceration?
2. How do formerly incarcerated Latinxs navigate, in the context of their culture, the psychological effects of incarceration during reintegration?
 - a. What facilitates and hinders this process?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter will encompass a review of the literature relevant to the topic of incarceration and its psychological effects, as well as its prevalence in the Latinx community. This overview of the psychological impacts of incarceration, including both normative psychological adaptations and more severe psychological effects, will be discussed more broadly and then with a focus on the limited research that has been done with individuals who identify as Latinx specifically. Finally, the effects of these issues on reintegration and recidivism will be discussed.

Incarceration and Latinxs

Latinxs are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, accounting for nearly 25% of violent arrests (Crime in the United States, 2014), and more than 40% of federal inmates (Lopez & Light, 2009), while only representing 17% of the overall U.S. population (Stepler & Brown, 2016). Latinxs are also more likely to live below the poverty line and live in under-resourced communities (Gradín, 2012), as well as experience discrimination related to their perceived ethno-racial identity (Nichols et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2012), which are all factors that are well-established in the literature as associated with greater contact with the criminal justice system (Ludwig et al., 2001; Simons et al., 2003). Katateladze et al. (2014) found that Latinx and Black individuals are more likely to be detained, be offered and receive plea bargains that involve time in prison, and be incarcerated for the same offenses than their white counterparts. In areas with high Latinx populations, Latinx are found to be disproportionately criminalized, targeted by police, and incarcerated (Rios, 2007). In California, for instance, where Latinx individuals make up 33% of the state's

adult population (Pew Research Center, 2015), they make up 41% of the adult incarcerated population (Grattet & Hayes, 2015; Prison Policy Initiative, 2016;).

The criminalization of immigration is another important factor in the overrepresentation of Latinxs in crime and prison statistics. The criminalization of immigration, also referred to in the literature as “crimmigration” (Isom Scott, 2017, p. 2), has accelerated since the early 1990s. During this time, immigration policies, such as Operation Streamline, which authorized federal criminal charges and detention without bail for those caught entering the U.S., and the National Fugitive Operations Program, which sanctioned searches and house raids, ushered in a time of increased ethno-racial profiling towards individuals perceived to be undocumented immigrants, and the unwarranted search, seizures, and detention of individuals who were perceived to be of Latinx descent (Provine, 2013). After the election of President Donald J. Trump in 2016, the criminalization of Latinxs has become more institutionally and socially sanctioned in the U.S. (Abrego et al., 2017; Cervantes & Menjivar, 2018; Chacón, 2017), as evidenced by increased border security, mass deportations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, and increased policing in immigrant communities (Nichols et al., 2018).

Intersectionality and the Term “Latinx”

The term “Latinx” will be used throughout this dissertation to describe individuals who were born in or can trace their cultural or ethnic background to Latin America (Salinas Jr. & Lozano, 2017). However, Latinxs are a diverse group with many within-group geographic, racial, and cultural differences; individuals who fall under this U.S.-centric ethnic category may come from a variety of racial, religious, class, linguistic, and social backgrounds that make speaking of this group as a monolith inappropriate and problematic

(Cobas et al., 2015). Given the history of Latinxs in the U.S., as well as the racialization of this group as a whole, many Latinxs hold shared socioeconomic, political, and cultural positionalities that influence the opportunities, contexts, and challenges they face (poverty, discrimination, etc.) in the U.S., despite the aforementioned intragroup diversity (Ballinas, 2017; Vue et al., 2017).

Taking an intersectional perspective on this diverse group is critical. There is evidence to support that Latinxs who have lighter-skin and European phenotypic features are afforded greater educational and professional opportunities (Gómez, 2000), endorse higher psychological well-being (Adames et al., 2016; Montalvo & Codina, 2001), experience less discrimination (Golash-Boza & Darity Jr, 2008), and exhibit better overall health and economic outcomes (Adames et al., 2016; Cuevas et al., 2016) than Latinxs with darker skin and non-white features. Further, Latinxs who are sexual or gender minorities are more likely to have contact with the criminal justice system (Meyer et al., 2017). These experiences are further complicated when individuals hold more than one marginalized identity as with darker-skinned Latinxs, or women and non-binary individuals that are or are perceived to be Latinx. An understanding of the criminalization, incarceration, and subsequent outcomes of Latinxs should therefore be conceptualized within the framework of their differential experiences depending on phenotype and intersecting identities (e.g., sexual orientation, gender expression and identity).

Mass Incarceration

Mass incarceration, also referred to as mass imprisonment and hyper-incarceration, is a term used to describe the massive rates of imprisonment resulting from the implementation of harsher drug offense penalties, minimum mandatory sentences, and lower thresholds for

life sentences in the U.S. since the 1970s (Alexander, 2012; Lynch, 2012). This was enforced in efforts to “get tough” on crime and win a War on Drugs that was overpowering the country and political discourse at the time (Alexander, 2012, p. 48; Bierie & Mann, 2017; Haney, 2002; Lynch, 2012). It is well-documented that mass incarceration has impacted, and continues to impact, minority groups disproportionately (Haney, 2017; Schnittker, 2014; Sugie & Turney, 2017), especially Black (Alexander, 2012) and Latinx communities (Isom Scott, 2017; Rios, 2007; 2011;). Incarceration has been linked to health, political, and social disparities on both community and individual levels, limiting former inmates’ access to voting power and social services (Lynch, 2012; Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). Two of the many consequences of mass incarceration, overcrowding and the use of solitary confinement, have been found to have negative psychological effects on those incarcerated during this era (Haney, 2002; 2017; 2018; Lynch, 2012).

Overcrowding. One of the more notorious and rampant effects of mass imprisonment has been overcrowding, which has severely deteriorated living conditions, decreased prisoner safety, and lowered access to meaningful programming in contemporary prisons as well as jails (Haney, 2002; 2012). While some variance in psychological effects between individuals housed in prisons and those housed in jails has been found, the psychological distinctions between these experiences appear to be more ambiguous (Yi et al., 2017). Traditionally, jails were designated as short-term facilities where individuals serve sentences usually related to minor charges, while prisons are used to house individuals serving long-term sentences related to more serious convictions (Haney, 2002; 2017; 2018; Lynch, 2012). The monumental increase in the prison population, however, has made this distinction less

relevant, as overcrowded prisons send inmates to county jails to offset the challenges of overpopulation (Haney, 2018).

Overcrowding often forces administrators and officials to keep individuals who would have, under ordinary circumstances, been transferred to prisons, in the jails. In some counties and states where overcrowding is particularly extreme, individuals who had been housed in prisons have often been sent to jails to serve the remainder of their sentence (Haney, 2002; Lynch, 2012). This is particularly important when reflecting on the psychological effects of jail and prison experiences. One study found that individuals in jails endorsed a greater number of mental health concerns than prison inmates given greater levels of anticipatory stress related to their criminal cases, higher rates of inmate turnover, and decreased access to mental health services and programming (Yi et al., 2017). However, individuals in prison continue to endorse greater than average psychological distress and many are diagnosed with severe mental illnesses (Daquin & Daigle, 2018; Haney, 2017).

The overwhelming growth of the carceral population has been linked to a greater risk of violence and victimization within facilities, less access to quality health care and meaningful activity (Haney, 2017; Lynch, 2012), and even the development and growth of prison gangs and subcultures (Lynch, 2012). The large numbers of prisoners in turn require larger numbers of correctional staff, many of which are inadequately trained to work with individuals who are suffering the unique difficulties of imprisonment or mental illness (Haney, 2017; Lynch, 2012). These factors combine to create environments that are increasingly hostile to stabilization, psychological well-being, and rehabilitation (Haney, 2017; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015).

Solitary Confinement. The challenges brought out by the influx of incarcerated people has also influenced the use of administrative segregation, or solitary confinement; a controversial but widespread practice in contemporary prisons and jails (Beck, 2015; Cloud et al., 2015; Haney, 2017; 2018; Schnittker et al., 2014). Administrators and facility officials justify the use of solitary confinement as a necessary means to control only the most dangerous and unpredictable individuals within the prison, as well as protect inmates who are at risk of violence at the hands of the general prison population (Beck, 2015; Cloud et al., 2015).

In practice, however, solitary confinement is routinely applied as punishment and a means of controlling behavior in overcrowded facilities. “Disciplinary segregation,” a punitive measure for individuals who are found to be in violation of facility rules and regulations, is a common practice (Cloud et al., 2015, p. 19). Correctional systems are not uniformly required to officially report administrative segregation data on a consistent or reliable basis, but estimates suggest over 100,000 people are in solitary confinement at any given moment (Haney, 2018). In a report by the U.S. Department of Justice on the use of restrictive housing in 2011-2012, 1 in 5 prisoners reported having been housed in solitary confinement in the last year (Beck, 2015).

Solitary confinement has been linked to the development of the most severe psychological issues such as paranoia, psychosis, major depression, rage, self-harm, and suicidality (Bulman, 2012; Cloud et al., 2015; Hagan et al., 2018; Haney, 2012; 2017; 2018; Lynch, 2012). The risk of developing psychopathology due to solitary confinement is even greater for individuals with pre-existing conditions—people already overrepresented in such settings given risk concerns for themselves and/or others (Lynch, 2012). Further, the growth

of Supermax facilities, where individuals serve their sentence in segregation 23 hours a day, has increased the number of individuals at risk for developing severe pathological issues during incarceration (Cloud et al., 2015; Haney, 2018; Lynch, 2012).

Overcrowding, Solitary Confinement, and Incarcerated Latinxs. Incarcerated people are disproportionately poor, racial and ethnic minority individuals (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015; Lopez-Aguado, 2016), and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the effects of overcrowding and solitary confinement. According to Haney & Lynch (1997), prison policies of placing alleged gang members in solitary or super-max facilities disproportionately impact prisoners of color, and result in an overrepresentation of Latinx inmates in solitary confinement in California, the state with the largest Latinx population in the U.S. Further, non-White prisoners, of all genders, are more likely to be perceived as more dangerous and disruptive and be placed in administrative segregation (Arrigo & Bullock, 2008; Mears & Watson, 2006). A review of the literature yielded little to no studies on the psychological effects of overcrowding and solitary confinement for Latinxs incarcerated and/or formerly incarcerated people specifically. However, a broader study did find that higher levels of self-harm while in solitary confinement were significantly associated with being Latinx, a connection found regardless of gender identity (Kaba et al., 2014).

Psychological Impacts of Incarceration

Most scholars agree that there are significant and lasting psychological consequences from imprisonment (Haney, 2002; 2012; Cloud et al., 2015; Dmitrieva et al., 2012; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012; McTier Jr et al., 2017; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). Others have suggested that diagnosable psychological effects only occur after long-term incarceration or when experiencing extreme circumstances, such as long-term solitary

confinement (Mackenzie & Goldstein, 1985; Rocheleau, 2013). Although there are dissenting views on the extreme manifestations of pathology, most researchers agree that the socioemotional changes most incarcerated individuals are required to make in order to survive in the modern prison or jail leave formerly incarcerated people without the proper psychological and social tools to successfully transition back to their communities (Cloud et al., 2015; DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2002; 2017; 2018; Lambie & Randall, 2013; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012; McTier Jr. et al., 2015; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015).

Several factors have been found to differentiate the psychological impacts of incarceration. There is evidence to suggest that individuals who have a history of mental illness (Daquin & Daigle, 2018; Haney, 2002; 2017; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012), a history of trauma (Anderson et al., 2016; Briere et al., 2008; 2016; Courtney & Maschi, 2012; Roos et al., 2016; Wolf & Shi, 2012), those who are younger (Dimitrieva et al., 2012; Lambie & Randell, 2013), sexual and gender minorities (Meyer et al., 2017), and individuals who lack social support (Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Wallace et al., 2016), are more vulnerable to the negative effects of incarceration. One of the fastest growing prison populations, women, present with higher rates of trauma, intimate partner violence, and mental illness as compared to men (Bloom et al., 2003; Loper & Levitt, 2011; West et al., 2010) and may even be more vulnerable to the additional isolation, trauma, and stigma of incarceration given gender stereotypes and expectations (Bloom et al., 2004).

Youth Offenders. Research on the psychological impact of incarceration for youth, or juvenile offenders, is consistent on the overall negative effects on youth development and outcomes, despite youths' well-documented resilience and ability to adapt (Rosenberg et al.,

2014; Todis et al., 2001). Practices endemic to incarceration (i.e. solitary confinement, separation from family and loved ones, decreased social interaction and interpersonal engagement) have been found to have particularly negative psychological effects on youth (Clark, 2017; Clements-Nolle & Waddington, 2019). Further, youth involved in the criminal system have disproportionately high levels of exposure to childhood trauma and adverse childhood events (ASEs; poverty, incarceration of parent/guardian, exposure to family violence, sexual abuse, etc.), have a higher likelihood of meeting criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition (i.e. depression, anxiety, PTSD), all of which increase vulnerability to negative psychological effects of incarceration (Dierkhising et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2015; Valentine et al., 2019). Youth that are of color and/or sexual and gender minorities, the vulnerabilities and risks are compounded (Jonsson et al., 2019; Robinson, 2020; Wilson et al., 2017).

Racial/Ethnic Differences. The research on how racial and ethnic identity may impact the psychological effects of incarceration is limited. Work delving into incarceration in racial/ethnic minority communities centers primarily on the sociological, economic, and political effects of incarceration on communities and families of incarcerated or previously incarcerated individuals, with a specific focus on African-American and Black samples (Cartagena, 2008; DeFina, 2013; DeFina & Hannon, 2010; Douglas & Sáenz, 2013; Morin, 2008; Oboler, 2009; Varghese et al., 2009). Research on the effects of imprisonment for Latinx individuals, specifically, has evaluated the role of incarceration in health risk behavior engagement (Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2012; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2017) and the deterioration of social and familial support networks during incarceration (Lee et al., 2016; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2014; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2018).

The family has been well established in the literature as playing a key role in community and individual health, and social outcomes in Latinx communities (Davila et al., 2011; Finch & Vega, 2003; Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007; Shaw & Pickett, 2013). For formerly incarcerated Latino men, familial and social support has been found to offset the negative consequences of incarceration and reintegration (Lee et al., 2016; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2012; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2014). Family has also been found to be a primary source of emotional support, resocialization, and economic support during reintegration for Latino men (Lee et al., 2016); a connection that has been found to be especially important for Latinas as well given the importance of reconnection to their children post-incarceration (Lopez & Pasko, 2017). Such findings suggest that formerly incarcerated Latinxs may be more vulnerable to the negative psychological impact of incarceration by way of the potentially negative effects it may have on their social and familial relationships.

Protective Factors & Differential Impacts. While some people are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of confinement, individuals who are quickly able to adapt to prison norms and culture (Haney, 2002; 2012), engage in meaningful programming at their institution (Haney, 2002; 2012), and identify some community or social support in or outside of prison (Wallace et al., 2016; Wildeman & Muller, 2012), may be less likely to experience negative psychological outcomes during and after incarceration. One study suggested that, for incarcerated Latinxs, the use of language and culture to establish a sense of solidarity with other Latinx inmates may facilitate a smoother and quicker adaptation to the institution and decrease feelings of isolation (Schaffner, 2008).

It is important to note that institutions vary greatly with respect to the kinds of conditions, norms, and circumstances detainees experience. Someone housed in one

maximum security prison may have a very different experience from another housed at another maximum security prison, and therefore deal with different impacts of that experience (DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2012). The administration of a facility, the services provided, and the approach to incarceration and punishment, have the potential to severely worsen, or improve, the behavioral and psychological responses of individuals detained there (Bierie & Mann, 2017; Haney, 2017). The research presented in the following section will explore the psychological effects of incarceration for the average incarcerated person.

Normative Psychological Adaptations. The current carceral system requires all inmates, regardless of facility or conviction type, to adapt and internalize norms that may intensify the negative effects of incarceration. Prisonization and institutionalization, hereafter used interchangeably, both refer to the adaptation process by which individuals internalize the regulations, practices, and culture of their institutional environments (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2002; 2012; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). This adaptive process is critical to prisoners' abilities to smoothly transition from being private citizens to inmates, and allows the incarcerated person to effectively manage the "often harsh and rigid institutional routine," the deprivations, and the lack of prosocial interactions common in penal settings (Haney, 2002, p. 80). The course of prisonization is often gradual and unconscious, becoming so engrained in the individuals' ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, that they may be unaware of the transformation until removed from the environment that elicited it in the first place (Haney, 2002; 2012).

The process of institutionalization includes specific psychological adjustments that are initially quite adaptive and required (Haney, 2002; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). Haney (2002) outlines these adaptations as (1) dependency on institutional structures and

constraints, (2) hypervigilance and interpersonal suspicion, (3) social withdrawal and isolation, (4) psychosocial distancing and emotional overregulation, (5) “incorporation of exploitative norms of prison culture” (p.82), (6) post-traumatic stress reactions to imprisonment, and (7) diminished self-worth and sense of personal value.

These changes often become significant deterrents to successful reintegration when individuals are unable to effectively and rapidly return to the practices and norms of mainstream society (Haney, 2012; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015).

Individuals who have come to depend on institutional structures and constraints, for example, may be more likely to avoid additional punitive consequences, such as solitary confinement while in prison, but may find it difficult to control their own impulses and behaviors once the threat of such measures is removed upon release (Dmitrieva et al., 2012; DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2012; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014). Similarly, individuals who have been able to protect themselves from victimization given interpersonal distrust, social withdrawal, and emotional distancing while confined, may struggle, once out in the community, with developing meaningful relationships and social support networks (DeVeaux, 2013; Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015).

Little research exists into institutionalizations’ effects on formerly incarcerated racial and/or ethnic minority mental health. The limited studies that are available look at the effects of secondary prisonization, a process whereby family members, partners, or individuals that have close relationships with currently incarcerated people, experience the deprivations of penal confinement (restricted rights, diminished resources, social marginalization, etc.), even though they are not currently incarcerated (Comfort, 2003) and how these spill over into predominantly poor communities of color (Lopez-Aguado, 2016). The process of

institutionalization for formerly incarcerated people of color specifically, or whether there are differential impacts or experiences of institutionalization based on racial or ethnic minority group membership, is understudied.

Severe Psychological Impacts. It is well-documented that individuals with an incarceration history are more likely to suffer from major depression, life dissatisfaction, post-traumatic stress, and mood disorders than individuals with no incarceration history (Courtney & Maschi, 2012; Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015; Turney et al., 2012; Wildeman et al., 2014). There is evidence to suggest that some individuals suffer from what has been branded “post-incarceration syndrome” (PICS), a condition characterized by enduring personality changes that mimic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but includes institutionalized personality traits (i.e. difficulty trusting others, hampered decision-making ability), social-sensory deprivation (i.e. difficulty discerning nonverbal communication, spatial disorientation), and profound feelings of social alienation (Liem & Kunst, 2013). Little work has been done on PICS and there are currently no prevalence rates for PICS in the U.S. Liem & Kunst (2013) suggest more work is needed to understand the presence and effects of PICS on formerly incarcerated individuals.

The exploration and identification of pre-existing psychological and potential characterological vulnerabilities of individuals who are convicted of crime have long been areas of study. For decades, the potential links between criminality and mental illness were explored, but this work typically focused on intelligence and cognitive testing, the identification and presence of antisocial personality, and other individual psychological factors (Bierie & Mann, 2017). It is not until recently that the study of the penal population from a psychological perspective has taken on a more contextualized and socially critical

tone (Bierie & Mann, 2017; Haney, 2017; Lambie & Randall, 2013; Lynch, 2012). While correctional facilities are legally mandated to provide mental health treatment, these services are often minimal and limited to crisis counseling and medication management (Haney, 2017; Reingle-Gonzalez & Connell, 2014). Further, the challenges of working in jails, the lack of adequate resources and funding, and the often rural and isolated locations of correctional facilities, create a challenge for recruiting adequately trained and willing mental health professionals (Gage, 2015).

Where past literature was focused on the identification of precursors to criminality and psychological explanations for criminal behavior (Bierie & Mann, 2017; Hess & Weiner, 1999), more current literature is mixed on the relationship between mental illness, criminality, and incarceration. Some scholars have argued that individuals who may have no previous psychiatric diagnoses develop them as a result of the harsh and abnormal conditions specific to correctional facilities (Sykes, 1958/2007; Liem & Kunst, 2013) such as isolation from loved ones, loss of privacy and autonomy, and hopelessness (Haney, 2012; Lynch, 2012).

Other scholars contend that modern correctional institutions have taken on the role traditionally ascribed to psychiatric facilities (Lynch, 2012; Haney, 2017), housing ten times more mentally ill individuals than mental hospitals (Torrey et al., 2014), and exacerbating preexisting vulnerabilities by placing mentally ill or psychologically vulnerable individuals in environments that are not structured or resourced to effectively and adequately treat them (Briere et al., 2008; Cloud et al., 2015; Courtney & Maschi, 2012; Haney, 2017; Lynch, 2012). Given that incarcerated people with psychiatric illnesses are more disabled by their conditions than similarly diagnosed people who are not incarcerated (Schnittker, 2014), the

use of correctional institutions as impromptu psychiatric facilities, and the services that the average prisoner with mental illness receives, commands further empirical study (Haney, 2017).

Further, individuals with extensive trauma histories, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, chronic poverty, neglect, and other adverse experiences, are not only at greater risk for incarceration, but may be more vulnerable to the psychological toll of imprisonment (Anderson et al., 2016; Briere et al., 2016; Courtney & Maschi, 2012; Haney, 2017; Roos et al., 2016; Sykes, 1958/2007; Wolf & Shi, 2012). In correctional institutions, the threat of violence from others or harsh punitive measures from officers and administration (DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2012; Wolff et al., 2007), and the deprivation of penal life (Haney, 2012; 2017; 2018) has been argued to inflict psychological harm on the incarcerated (DeVeaux, 2013; Fazel et al., 2016; Haney, 2017). These harms have been found to be especially damaging for individuals with preexisting psychological conditions (Briere et al., 2008; Daquin & Daigle, 2018; Haney, 2017; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012) given what is known about the role of additional stress and trauma for individuals with mental illness (Anderson et al., 2016; Briere et al., 2016; Herman, 1992; Turney et al., 2012).

Some scholars have characterized the challenges of imprisonment as more than just stressful, but traumatic (DeVeaux, 2013; Herman, 1992; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Torrey et al., 2014). The development of the diagnosis of complex trauma was initiated in part because of Herman's (1992) inability to capture the chronic, recurrent exposure, varied symptomologies, and persistent personality changes experienced by prisoners and other high-risk groups, with the official criteria of PTSD. Many inmates' complex history of trauma is compounded when faced with additional acute stressors or trauma incidents while incarcerated (DeVeaux, 2013;

Liem & Kunst, 2013); in one study, incarceration was found to increase the lifetime likelihood of meeting the diagnostic threshold for PTSD by 200% (Anderson et al., 2016).

Wolff et al.'s (2007) epidemiological study found nearly 40% of prisoners endorsed experiencing sexual or physical victimization in the six months prior to data collection. The cumulative risk of such occurrences, highly prevalent in carceral settings, appears to increase susceptibility as well as assaultive behaviors; individuals with a history of incarceration are three times more likely to witness someone be physically injured or beaten and equally likely to have injured someone else (Anderson et al., 2016). While it is critical to note that mental illness is dynamic and that individuals may exhibit symptoms at some points and no symptoms during other points of confinement (Haney, 2017), the prevalence of psychological pain, trauma, and distress among prisoners suggests that contemporary incarceration has harmful and aggravating effects on inmates' psychological wellbeing (Fazel et al., 2016).

For Latinx prisoners and formerly incarcerated individuals, the research on the complex relationship to severe mental illness and mental health difficulties is more limited. Studies examining PTSD prevalence in Latinx and Black adults in the U.S. suggests they may develop PTSD at higher rates (Himle et al., 2009; Marshall et al., 2009), and experience more severe symptoms than Whites (Roberts et al., 2011). These higher prevalence rates have been associated with higher rates of incarceration, among other things, in both populations (Carson, 2018). Latinx prisoners have also been found to be much more likely to endorse trauma and trauma-related symptoms before, during, and after prison (Haugebrook et al., 2010; Pérez-Pedrogo et al., 2018; Velasquez & Funes, 2014), exhibit comorbid PTSD and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) symptoms (Pérez-Pedrogo et al.,

2018), and are more likely to commit suicide while incarcerated than African American inmates (Fazel et al., 2008; Way et al., 2005). Despite this, Latinxs are underrepresented in samples of offenders with mental illness (Haugebrook et al., 2010), a finding that researchers have suggested may be related to a lack of treatment seeking among Latinx inmates (Ricks & Eno Loudon, 2016; Velasquez & Funes, 2014), as well as lack of professionals' cultural competency in identifying mental health needs for this group (Ricks & Eno Loudon, 2016).

Reintegration and Recidivism

Reintegration is defined as the process of re-incorporation into society post-incarceration, and usually involves adjusting to life post-confinement through meaningful engagement in work, family, and social relationships, while avoiding re-incarceration (Laub & Sampson, 2001; 2003). This is different from the term, reentry, that simply denotes the release of a previously incarcerated person back to their community (Rosenthal & Wolf, 2004). The process of reintegration further complicates and poses substantial social and economic challenges to formerly incarcerated people.

The challenges of incarceration are compounded by the psychological effects of confinement, reentry, and reintegration. The consequences of incarceration are often devastating and regularly augment pre-existing difficulties in securing social support (Taylor, 2016; Cochran, 2014), employment (Duwe & Clark, 2014; Livingston & Miller, 2014), and housing (Duwe & Clark, 2014), as well as exponentially increase the risk for poor health outcomes, discrimination, and poverty (Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015). Those with a history of incarceration must cope with the stigma, limited access to social resources, and sociocultural isolation that often results from a criminal record (Haney, 2002; 2012; 2017; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). The emotional

distancing, interpersonal suspicion, and disengagement that may have at once been adaptive during incarceration (DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2002; 2012; Lynch, 2012), quickly become maladaptive and disorienting during reentry, when strong communities of support and interpersonal skills are vital to success, especially for formerly incarcerated Latinxs (Lee et al., 2016; Lopez & Pasko, 2017; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2012; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2014). The prognosis for re-entry for most people is discouraging (Grieb et al., 2014; Morenoff & Harding, 2014), and the extant literature vacillates between accentuating the role of individual characteristics, such as coping skills and addiction (Cimino et al., 2015; LaCourse et al., 2018), to how social factors, such as social rejection and returning to poorly resourced communities, inhibit the formerly incarcerated from effective reintegration (Clone & DeHart, 2014; Grieb et al., 2014; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015).

Schnittker & Massoglia (2015) explored the intersecting role of stigma and the psychological pains of imprisonment using a socio-cognitive framework. They suggest that stigmas associated with incarceration are highly entrenched and difficult to contest because incarceration stigma is qualitatively different from other types of stigma. In incarceration stigma, truth and belief about the group are closely aligned (e.g., “former inmates are likely to reoffend and return to prison;” “former inmates were found guilty of a crime”), making such beliefs less likely to be proven untrue like other stigma-related beliefs (e.g., “all Latinxs are undocumented”). These stigmas force formerly incarcerated people to employ social strategies during reintegration that put them at risk for reinforcing these stereotypes (concealing their history confirms the belief that formerly incarcerated people are untrustworthy; endorsing stereotypes in efforts to distance themselves from other formerly incarcerated individuals by presenting themselves as atypical).

The unique challenges brought about by battling incarceration stigma are compounded by social and legal environments that conspire in ways to make reintegration extraordinarily difficult, especially for those from poor communities of color. Individuals with a criminal record are less likely to have stable and secure employment (Duwe & Clark, 2014; Liem & Garcin, 2014; Livingston & Miller, 2014) or stable and safe housing (Duwe & Clark, 2014). These stressors increase the likelihood that they will resort to crime to survive (Morenoff & Harding, 2014; Terry & Abrams, 2017). While most individuals are released under some sort of correctional supervision, given the large numbers of individuals being released every day, a parole or probation officer's role is often more surveillance and containment focused than supportive and facilitative of transition (Clear, 2007).

For Latinxs, reintegration and contending with multiple stigmas is particularly challenging. One study found that although Latinos have a re-arrest rate comparable to those of White men, their re-conviction and re-incarceration rates mirror those of Black men (McGovern et al., 2009). Barriers to successful community reintegration for Latinxs include lack of adequate housing, lack of community and social supports, and limited employment opportunities (Valera et al., 2017; Velasquez & Funes, 2014), as well as complications related to documentation status (Velasquez, 2017), substance use disorders (Begun et al., 2016; Haugebrook et al., 2010), and trauma and other mental health-related distress (Haugebrook et al., 2010; Pérez-Pedrogo et al., 2018; Velasquez & Funes, 2014). Individuals who struggle with PTSD are also at greater risk of recidivism (Sadeh & McNeil, 2015), further increasing the challenges of recidivism for formerly incarcerated Latinxs. A lack of resources and opportunities in home communities also limits post-release prospects (Clone & DeHart, 2014; Grieb et al., 2014; Velasquez & Funes, 2014). These challenges, paired with

the growing hostility toward and criminalization of Latinx communities (Isom Scott, 2017; Provine, 2013), exponentially complicate reintegration for this group, who must contend with the socioemotional and economic challenges of reintegration with multiple stigmas and sources of discrimination.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter details of the methodology utilized for the exploration of formerly incarcerated Latinxs' perceptions of the psychological impact of incarceration and its effect on reintegration. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as delineated by Smith et al. (2009) was used in this study, drawing upon data from individual, semi-structured interviews, to understand the perceptions and meanings that formerly incarcerated self-identified Latinxs ascribed to their experiences of incarceration, reintegration, and the psychological impacts of such experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). The combination of centering participant voices and their meanings for the phenomena of interest—incarceration and reintegration—are key elements of IPA and make this methodology a good fit for this study.

Philosophy of Science Framework

The philosophical assumptions of the method used in the current study are congruent with constructivist and critical-ideological paradigms of science (Ponterotto, 2005). Critical theorists assert that systems of power are inextricably linked to research and the acquisition of knowledge through the sociocultural, historical, and political contexts under which these exist; therefore, researchers and participants hold positionalities relative to each other and to these larger systems of power that impact the way research is conducted and the direction the process of inquiry takes (Heppner et al., 2016; Ponterotto, 2005). Similarly, constructivists approach knowledge and scientific study with an understanding that objectivity is an illusion and that each interaction and experience is co-created and equally valid (Creswell & Poth,

2017; Heppner et al., 2016; Ponterotto, 2005). This is in line with the guiding philosophical assumptions of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

In both critical-ideological and constructivist stances, as in IPA, the exploration of biases and an honest examination of the values and preconceptions of the researcher, who is in a position of relative power to the participant, is key. The critical-ideological approach emphasizes the existence of power imbalances based on identity markers and social positionalities, while constructivists acknowledge the individual contributions, and their relative values and positionalities, to what is constructed. These paradigms are particularly suited for research with marginalized groups and when the goal of such research implicates challenging beliefs about identity and psychosocial experiences that contest established structures of power (Morse, 2005).

Design

Qualitative Research. Qualitative research is flexible in approach and has roots in disciplines as distinct as sociology, education, and history (Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative research is an approach to scientific inquiry designed to describe and interpret experience in a naturalistic setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Such an approach to research is particularly fitting for exploring phenomena that are understudied, unexplored, or not yet adequately understood, as well as when critiquing power structures and facilitating the empowerment of minoritized populations (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Given the purpose of the proposed study and the paucity of literature on the psychological experiences of formerly incarcerated Latinx individuals, as well as the importance of social power in the experience of incarceration and reintegration, a qualitative approach is fitting.

Qualitative research employs both deductive and inductive analytic approaches, grounding conclusions firmly in the data while also allowing theoretical descriptions and analysis to emerge (Thomas, 2006). This is rooted in the ontological perspective of constructivism where the parallel existence of multiple truths and constructed realities is assumed (Ponterotto, 2005). The epistemological foundation for qualitative research refers to the ways in which knowledge is exchanged and learned, and rests on the notion of a co-construction of reality, and the dynamic relationship between researchers and participants. Axiologically, the researcher acknowledges the transactional nature of participant interviews and the value of critically conceptualizing and presenting participant voices. Relatedly, qualitative research emphasizes the significance of the individual and does not attempt to generalize findings to groups or populations, but instead to contextualize, complicate, and provide in-depth descriptions of individual and sociocultural experiences. Finally, there is value placed on the critical evaluation of the role of the researchers' identities, values, ideas, and social positions. It is recognized that these characteristics may interact with a study and influence the direction and data collected, especially in regards to the interpretation of the study (Ponterotto, 2005).

Given these philosophical, ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations (Ponterotto, 2005), researchers have recognized qualitative design as especially apt for examining the experiences of diverse populations and groups historically neglected within U.S. psychology (Cauce, 2011; Lyons et al., 2013). In the proposed study, a qualitative approach is fitting given the structural barriers and stigmatization of formerly incarcerated Latinxs in the U.S. Sensitivity to, and the centrality of participant voices, are core tenets of qualitative research (Cauce, 2011; Lyons et al., 2013; Ponterotto, 2005), a particularly

important consideration given the lack of representation and communal power formerly incarcerated people, and formerly incarcerated ethnic minorities, face. The current study adheres to these underlying philosophies through the careful description, interpretation, and presentation of participants lived experiences and life meanings, as well as by honoring the inside perspective that only formerly incarcerated Latinxs can have of the psychological impact of incarceration and its effect on their reintegration.

Use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was deemed especially appropriate for the research questions because the epistemological stance of these questions and the goal of the present study were consistent. The exploratory nature of the study, the emphasis on the perspectives of participants and the meanings they attached to their lived experiences, as well as the focus on their perceptions of the process of incarceration and reintegration align with the epistemological foundations of the selected method (Smith et al., 2009). This method, IPA, is a detail-oriented approach to qualitative, inductive, experiential, and psychological research which has been informed by three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenology. Phenomenology, broadly, is the study of experience, with roots in the philosophical work of Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenological inquiry seeks to uncover the essential qualities of a lived experience, and, in research, reduces those essential qualities to units of interpretive analysis. Phenomenologists subscribe to a wide view of consciousness, diverging from the more traditional subject-object dynamic, and positing that objects (experience, in this case) are inextricably linked to human consciousness and perception (how we make sense of such

experience). That is, because an object cannot be understood, and therefore exist, outside of human awareness, objectivity and subjectivity are intertwined (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenology, therefore, concerns the importance and relevance of perception (Smith et al., 2009). An understanding that a person's perception is embedded in a world of objects, relationships, language, and culture—ultimately, in a context, that cannot be extracted from the individual, is key to this approach (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenologically grounded research frequently features an initial inquiry into the experiential reality of a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question. Data analysis involves engagement in a systematic approach that places statements considered significant into broader, thematic units (Smith et al., 2009).

For the current study, the focus is on the perceptions of participants and their own understanding of their lived experiences, as individuals and as part of a greater system. This approach is critical to better understanding the psychological impact of incarceration and its effects on reintegration. Such an endeavor is automatically interpretative, as the researcher attempts to make meaning out of how participants make meanings out of their actions and experiences. This interpretative process requires an understanding of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation—specifically, of the relationship between that which is being interpreted and the interpreter (Smith et al., 2009). The process of interpretation itself is concerned with the negotiation of the explicit and objective textual meaning of something with the implicit, contextual meaning of that same thing. Thus, the specific meaning of an experience is best captured in the interaction between the explicit relation of the experience and the implicit meaning of that same experience. This interaction between the explicit and implicit meanings of an experience, and therefore

between the participant and the researcher, is critical to understanding IPA as a method of empirical investigation that marries the explicit and implicit—first-person and second-person—interpretations as a means of reaching greater understanding of a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

In IPA, the examination of how a phenomenon occurs and is understood is entwined with the way researchers involve themselves in the process of making sense of and facilitating understanding of that phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). As with the notion of the hermeneutic circle, where there is a dynamic relationship between the part and the whole (so that the part is best understood in relation to the whole, and the whole is best understood in relation to the part), IPA and the research process is iterative and interactional; helping achieve both a deeper understanding of the specific phenomenon, as well as the context in which the phenomenon is embedded. The individual, therefore, is a rich unit of analysis that can offer insights into broader, more systemic occurrences (Smith et al., 2009).

Ideography. Ideography is the study of the particular, relating to the study of specific instances, above and beyond general laws or principles (Smith et al., 2009). The majority of psychological research focuses on nomothetic pursuits—striving to make claims at the group or population level, where general understandings of human behavior can be made. Psychological research that uses an ideographic approach, such as IPA, is much more focused on detailed, in-depth analysis, and a commitment to greater understandings of particular experiential realities (an event, process, relationship, identity). Accordingly, IPA calls for “small, purposively-selected and carefully-situated samples” (p. 29), that reflect particular experiences, understandings, and interpretations that may offer important considerations for better understanding broader phenomena.

In the current study, the particular experience is that of formerly incarcerated Latinxs individuals and their perceptions of the psychological impact of their incarceration and its effect on their reintegration experiences, considering how culture, family, and community may inform their process. Through a more in-depth, detailed understanding of the experiences of participants, a better understanding of the broader phenomena of the psychological impact of reintegration and incarceration for Latinxs can be reached.

IPA as a Method of Inquiry and Analysis. As previously discussed, IPA involves a detailed exploration of a lived experience and an opportunity to express such experience on “its own terms” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32), while still acknowledging the inherently interpretative nature of the research process. IPA’s ideographic approach situates participants in their specific contexts, centering their perspectives, and engaging in a thorough examination of each case (individual experience of the phenomenon) before, and in order to, make more general claims, in a process called theoretical transferability (Smith et al., 2009).

Theoretical transferability involves making connections between the individual, detailed cases of an IPA study, the readers’ own experiential knowledge base, and the extant psychological literature. Given that a central tenet of IPA is that humans are “sense-making creature[s],” the meanings which people ascribe to an experience, become that experience for the person, and “can be said to represent the experience itself” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33). This reflects the belief that such meanings can offer valuable insights into the cognitive-affective, existential, and structural domains of the broader condition.

Although IPA is inherently an iterative and flexible method, Smith et al. (2009) present a step-by-step process for those conducting IPA research for the first time. The first step involves an exploration of whether IPA is a good fit by determining if there exists a

group of individuals who share the experience in question, and exploring whether the topic and research questions are consistent with the aims and scope of the method. Next, it is important to frankly evaluate not just the accessibility of the population in question, but the researchers' previous knowledge of and experience with the proposed participants. This is similar to the phenomenological process of bracketing (Moustakas, 1994), although the goal is not to set aside previous knowledge or experience, but to become conscious, honest, and interrogative of such preconceptions to more critically approach the design, collection, and ultimately, interpretation of data gathered in the study (Smith et al., 2009).

The next step is to widen understanding and knowledge of phenomenon under study with a literature review, although IPA is an inductive approach and interview questions are not usually theory-driven (Smith et al., 2009). The literature review, then, is for the purpose of identifying unexplored areas in the literature and gathering a general understanding of what is already known about the topic in question. Data is then collected from multiple, eligible participants through in-depth interviews, usually composed of a few open-ended questions, as the "aim is to enable participants to express their concerns and make their claims on their own terms" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 42). The guiding questions for an IPA study are those regarding what was experienced and what meanings and connections participants have ascribed to those experiences.

Positionality & Reflexivity

Research reflexivity and positionality is, as previously discussed, critical to conducting rigorous and valid qualitative research. Researcher identity markers (gender, race, ability status, sexual orientation, etc.) and previous experience with a phenomenon or community under study, impacts access to said community, the nature and development of

the researcher-participant relationship, as well as the lens by which the research is conducted and findings extracted (Berger, 2015). One helpful way that this complicated interaction has been conceptualized is through the notions of insider research, when the researcher identifies similarly to the community or has experienced the phenomenon in question, and outsider research, when researcher identities do not align with those of the population or phenomenon under study (Morrow, 2005; Neuman, 2006).

In the present study, the principal researcher holds a complicated positionality. On the one hand, she has had previous personal experience with incarceration in her community as well as in her family, which places her as an insider to the community of carceral system-impacted individuals. She also identifies as a second-generation Latina, which places her as an insider in Latinx communities in relation to individuals who do not trace their heritage to a country in Latin-America. On the other hand, she is also an outsider in that she has never been incarcerated or been personally detained at any point in her life, and in that she is a second-generation Cuban-American and may be perceived as an outsider by participants that are of other nationalities or generations.

There are benefits and challenges to both insider and outsider positionalities (Morrow, 2005). For researchers perceived to be insiders, assumptions of shared understandings can complicate data collection, such as when participants do not adequately verbalize experiences or situations that they assume the researcher is already privy to, or when researchers themselves overlook segments of data because they are perceived to be common knowledge (Kanuha, 2000; Perry et al., 2004). Outsider positionality, alternatively, may hold advantages such as attention to particularities that may be lost on an insider and gathering more in-depth explanations and descriptions because of participants' perceptions of

their outsider status (Morrow, 2005; Tang, 2007). The simultaneous and complex insider-outsider positionality of the researcher in the current study, required careful reflexivity and consideration throughout the recruitment, data collection, analysis, and dissemination processes (Morrow, 2005). This was considered in the development of the research questions, in the piloting of interview protocols with formerly incarcerated individuals, as well as through the use of research notes and an external auditor to question decisions and interpretations during analysis.

The lead researcher developed relationships with formerly incarcerated communities in California, as well as the East Coast of the U.S. (New York City, Miami, Boston) through engagement in advocacy efforts, conference attendance, networking with researchers and educators interested in mass incarceration and reintegration, and working with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals clinically and in community and university organizations. The researcher also conducted past research with formerly incarcerated Latino men. The researcher's identity as a Latina, as a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology, as someone who has been indirectly impacted by incarceration, as well as her interests in issues of diversity, equity, and access to education and mental health services, all worked together to influence the questions that were explored, the focus on strengths in participants' lives, and the analysis and interpretation of data. Given her worldview and perspective, the researcher made efforts to "stay close to" data, using the specific vocabulary and interpretations of participants throughout the analysis process, and practicing transparency about the analysis process with participants and an auditor, as called for by IPA (Smith et al., 2009).

Recruitment

Given Smith et al.'s (2009) suggestion of 4-6 participants for a quality IPA study, that invites both depth and breadth, a total of 5 participants were recruited based on the following criteria: (1) self-identifying as Latinx, (2) reporting having been incarcerated in the last 5 years for a continuous period of one year or more, (3) reporting having been in the community (post-incarceration) for at least twelve months, (4) being over the age of 18 at time of recruitment and data collection, (5) not having been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons in last 6 months, (6) not having experienced psychotic symptoms since release, and (5) being willing to talk about their experiences of incarceration and reintegration.

Participants were recruited through email, using primarily community contacts in organizations that work with formerly incarcerated communities. Recruitment began with emails requesting participation in a study about experiences relating to incarceration and reintegration in people that identified as Latinx, Hispanic, or Chicanx. Requests were sent from the researchers' university-affiliated email account and included information about the study, how to participate, incentives offered, and rights of the participant.

The researcher also utilized snowball sampling, which has been shown to be particularly effective for research with highly specific subgroups and with groups that may be difficult to recruit because of a lack of historical trust in researchers (Neuman, 2006; Sadler et al., 2010). Participants were asked to share information about the study and how to participate with other potentially interested and eligible individuals in their networks.

Individuals who expressed interest in participating in the study were first screened with a short questionnaire to ensure eligibility (see Appendix A). Those meeting criteria were invited for an interview. Out of 12 individuals screened, 5 met criteria for the study. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and state closures of public areas and university spaces, all

interviews were conducted via Zoom given the circumstances and for the health of participants and the researcher.

Participants

A total of five individuals participated in this study. Table 1 organizes relevant demographic information for participants. Two participants identified as ciswomen, two as cismen, and one participant identified as non-binary. Participants ranged from 21 to 47 years of age at the time of data collection, with a mean age of 37.4 years. Four of the participants served long-term sentences, defined in this study as more than 5 years, and one served a 2-year sentence. Three participants self-identified as Mexican-American, one as Chicano, and one as a Mexican national. Information about participants' specific circumstances surrounding convictions is limited to protect confidentiality and was not inquired about extensively.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender Identity & Pronouns	Age at Interview	Length of Last Incarceration	Time Back Home at Interview	Type of Facility
Salma	ciswoman (she/her)	22	6.5 years	> 1 year	State Juvenile Facility
Rey	cisman (he/his)	46	28 years	2.5 years	State Prison
Teodoro	cisman (he/his)	47	12 years	4 years	State Prison
Angel	non-binary/queer (she/her)	34	7 years	3 years	Federal Prison
Margo	ciswoman (she/her)	38	2 years	3 years	County Jail

Salma. Salma, a 22-year-old self-identified Mexican-American, cisgender woman, was born on the West Coast of the U.S., where she served a six and a half-year sentence that began when she was 14 years old. This had been the second time Salma had been arrested, and the first time she had been detained in a facility. Salma was released at the age of 21 and had been back in her community now for over a year at the time of the interview. She lived alone with her puppy, which she credited with getting her out of the house and opening her up to others. She shared being on disability for trauma-related mental health challenges, and was in the process of enrolling in a local community college to begin an Associates' Degree.

Angel. At the time of the interview, Angel was a 34-year-old, non-binary, Mexican-American living in a large metropolitan city. She was born on the West Coast of the U.S., where she served a seven-year sentence from the ages of 24-31. Angel's arrest and subsequent conviction happened while she was in college and was the first time she had been arrested and detained. She lived alone and was working for a non-profit organization that focuses on advocating for and supporting formerly and currently incarcerated women as they transition to their communities and reintegrate.

Teodoro. Teodoro was a 47-year-old, self-identified Mexican national, cisgender male who reported "growing up in the system" since the age of 15. Teodoro served multiple long-term sentences throughout his life, culminating in a final term of 12 years in a medium security prison. At the time of the interview, he had been out of prison for 4 years. He is the father of three children and owns his own business. Teodoro volunteers his time working with recently released individuals through his church and lives with his mother and sister in the same community he grew up in.

Rey. At the time of data collection, Rey was a 46-year-old, cisgender Chicano, living in a large metropolitan city in the Western U.S. Rey reported also “growing up in the system” as he was incarcerated from the ages of 15 to 43, serving a total of 28 years, the last 12 of which were in solitary confinement. Rey was released after the passage of SB 261, which provided currently incarcerated individuals who had offended before the age of 23 eligibility for release under parole. At the time of the interview, Rey worked in a non-profit organization that provides re-entry wraparound services to formerly incarcerated individuals and was living with his girlfriend and stepdaughter.

Margo. Margo was a 38-year-old, Mexican-American, cisgender mother of three, born and raised in the Western U.S. Margo lived in a small rural community in the Western U.S. with her mother, brother, nieces and nephews. Margo served a two-year sentence (9-months of which were at a residential drug treatment facility) and was a student at a local community college at the time of the interview. She expressed hopes to become a social worker that focuses on working with individuals struggling with substance use. Margo was also in the process of having her record expunged.

Instruments

Screening Instrument. A screening instrument was developed for the purposes of this study and used to determine eligibility based on time incarcerated, time since release, and for context (see Appendix A). Once eligibility was confirmed and informed consent provided, participants were invited to schedule an interview time.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed for the purposes of this study and utilized to gather data on the lived experience and perspectives of formerly incarcerated Latinxs (see Appendix C). Topics from the initial

interview protocol included exploring how incarceration has psychologically impacted participants (i.e. “*How do you think your incarceration affected you emotionally/psychologically?*”), and how these impacts were navigated in the context of participants’ cultural identities, relationships, and communities (i.e. *How do you think these things affected your return to your community?*).

A semi-structured protocol provides the flexibility to explore topics and questions based on participants’ responses and allows the exploration and inclusion of data and findings that are not limited by researchers’ original questions or conceptions of the topic at hand. This is critical in the co-construction and interpretation of data between researcher and participant, as both attempt to understand lived experiences and perspectives about incarceration and reintegration through an iterative process of dialogue and exploration (Smith et al., 2009). The initial interview protocol was piloted with one formerly incarcerated Latinx individual and was updated for clarity, relevance, and general feedback about language use and interpersonal norms in formerly incarcerated communities. No significant changes, aside from vocabulary use, resulted from this piloting process.

Procedures

Once participant eligibility was confirmed and interviews were scheduled, consent forms were reviewed with each participant (see Appendix D). The researcher carefully discussed participant rights, the inherent risks and benefits of participation, relevant psychological resources, and answered any questions about the study and how participant identities would be protected before interview commencement. With participant consent, the interviews were audio recorded. Participants were also invited to provide any process comments or feedback to the researcher given the sensitive topics discussed and the use of an

online platform to conduct interviews. No participants disclosed concerns and shared they were open to being contacted throughout the data analysis and dissemination process of the study. Participants were individually contacted with updates about the research progress, to provide member checks of themes, and to clarify how they would like interview information to be reported in the final write-up of findings.

Before ending the interviews, participants were also provided with a final demographic questionnaire to gather information regarding their age, gender identification, race, ethnicity, length of incarceration, times being incarcerated, type of offense, and generational status (see Appendix B) that was not already collected through the interview. This information provided critical background and was used for interpretative context—given the importance of in-depth understanding in IPA (Smith et al., 2009). All interviews lasted between 60-120 minutes, were transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using the guidelines outlined by Smith et al. (2009) for IPA. Audio files and interview transcripts were stored on a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet belonging to the principal researcher throughout the study and will be destroyed after the study has been completed. Participants were each provided a \$40 online Amazon gift-card for participating in the study.

Data Analysis Process

As per IPA guidelines, data analysis of these interviews was conducted through an iterative cycle (Smith, 2007; Smith et al., 2009) that drew upon strategies from a variety of qualitative approaches. Interviews were analyzed within the framework of what was experienced by participants and what meanings and connections participants ascribed to their experiences. The researcher engaged in consistent reflexivity throughout the research process, which involved exploring her positionality and experiences around incarceration and

reintegration in the context of Latinx identities through journaling and meetings with an external auditor, combining insights from these with the meaning of participants lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

The steps of IPA analysis employed in this study were: (1) thorough and multiple readings of each transcript to facilitate the understanding of a “core essence” of participant experiences and encourage familiarity with data, (2) line-by-line analysis of experiential claims, understandings, and meanings of each individual participant, (3) identification of emergent themes or patterns within each interview and then across participant interviews, (4) engagement in an auditing process with an experienced qualitative researcher to test and develop plausibility of such interpretations, (5) creation of individual participant case narratives, and, finally, (6) the production of a description of the essential qualities of the phenomenon in question.

In the creation of an overarching coding scheme, themes that arose within participant accounts and across interviews were identified through analysis by the principal researcher. Specifically, this process involved identification of themes in each interview, grouping text based on conceptual similarities, and then identifying themes across interviews by creating a master list. From this master list, themes that were repeated and themes that were individual were identified. Later, all themes were clustered into groups, aligned in terms of shared meaning or features (i.e. psychological impacts, reintegration experiences, etc.), and organized into superordinate and subthemes, in a process called subsumption (Smith et al., 2009). These superordinate themes were then broken down into subthemes and were consistently compared to transcripts in an iterative process that ensured themes were grounded in data. Special attention was paid to themes that appeared to be emerging

according to experiential or identity lines (gender, sexual orientation, parent status, type of offense, etc.) to contribute to the understanding of the particularities of the phenomenon of incarceration and reintegration for formerly incarcerated Latinxs and the impact that intersectional identities may have had on these experiences and interpretations.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research entails the quality and rigor of a study's methods, analysis, and findings (Morrow, 2005). Several methods were used to ensure trustworthiness in the present study. The principal researcher, a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology trained in qualitative and mixed-method research, engaged in external auditing with another researcher with experience in qualitative methods and, specifically with IPA, to confirm thematic identifications and analysis of themes. The external auditor, a heterosexual, cisgender, Latina clinical psychologist of South American (Venezuelan) descent, had previously conducted an interpretative phenomenological analysis project where culture was a central focus for her own doctoral dissertation. Her training included social science research training, particularly in qualitative methods, through doctoral level coursework, independent and group research project management, as well as mentorship of undergraduate and graduate research in qualitative methods. The auditor identified as non-system-impacted or formerly incarcerated. This external auditor agreed to audit the current study by reviewing de-identified transcripts, coded themes and coded text, process the principal researchers' interpretations, as well as review the final write-up of results.

Finally, member checking (defined as reviewing interpretations and thematic summaries with participants for accuracy; Morrow, 2005) was used to verify interpretations

and was incorporated throughout data collection and analysis process. During interviews, the researcher frequently checked for understanding, clarity, and assurance that she was understanding the experience correctly by repeating what was being shared and frequently asking for elaboration and clarification from participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Participants were also contacted after analysis and auditing was completed, and offered the opportunity to view and discuss findings. Three participants (Salma, Angel, and Rey) responded and supported researcher's interpretations. An iterative process, one based on analysis and participant feedback, helped to ensure that the researcher appropriately captured and explained the "essence" of the participants' experiences as formerly incarcerated Latinxs. These suggestions and feedback were incorporated into the final results.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results for this study will be presented as individual participant narratives, both for context and in accordance with IPA's idiographic nature. Superordinate themes include (1) *Psychological Impacts of Incarceration*, (2) *Effects on Reintegration*, (3) *Experiences with Support Services*, and (4) *Role of Cultural and Social Identities*.

Salma

At the time of data collection, Salma was a 22-year-old self-identified Mexican-American woman who had been out of prison for 14 months. Salma's experience of incarceration and reintegration was highly defined by her mental health challenges, prior to and after, her incarceration. Salma describes a long history of individual and family trauma that resulted in depressive symptoms, difficulties managing her anger and post-traumatic stress, and self-injurious behavior. These emotional and relational difficulties led to engagement with "the system" and being placed on probation before the age of 13. At 14, Salma was sentenced to prison. After serving six and a half years in a juvenile facility and later a youth prison, she was released at the age of 21. Salma recounts that her previous mental health symptoms only worsened during this period of her life, and after being routinely transferred to a county over 200 miles away from her family, suicidal thinking and behavior became a significant concern:

They transferred me out to do my time...like over 200 miles from my family. My mom didn't even have a car...[she] was barely able to get to my court date at the juvenile hall and that's like, what? Ten to fifteen miles [from home] at the time—

that's when they started putting me on suicide watches—I started...doing suicidal behaviors and stuff like that.

Salma described experiencing feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness while incarcerated that increased her feelings of suicidality:

[They would] literally strip me of my clothes like, these grown people...makes you feel...kind of small in a way...'cause, I can't really push them or fight back, 'cause then I get in trouble...I just felt... Like at that point, I was thinking it was kinda just useless and then just like here for no reason...kinda it made me a little more suicidal.

These feelings of powerlessness and indignity led to a sense of hopelessness about her future and apathy towards “doing good:”

[I would fall] like all the way into a black hole...After two, three weeks (being at the facility), I'm like, 'Okay if they keep me here, they keep me here.'... 'Whatever happens, happens.' I wasn't trying to be good or...do extra to be good.

Salma reported her pre-incarceration trauma and subsequent emotional challenges were only compounded by experiences she had while incarcerated. She reports physically violent interactions with staff and a sense of not being treated as “a full human:”

...a few times like I got my, uh...my chest bone, like it got cracked 'cause they stand on me before too hard before [sic] in handcuffs, like I couldn't even like, stop my fall... my arm was broke, it was pulled out of the socket. When you're locked up they don't see you as like a full human, which is messed up, but it's the truth...like you're not seen as a child.

Salma shared that she often felt her mental health was not taken seriously and that “suicide watch” was used as a punishment or as a way to make staff money:

Normally when I'll...get really, really mad or frustrated like right before I blackout, I'll start crying...I'm so mad that I'm just gonna hurt me...and then it's like, okay, suicide watch... it would just be like an ongoing thing. A few times I had went through night terrors...really bad...And I started like scratching my arms and my face and stuff, like really without knowing it when I'm sleeping. And then they'd be like, 'Oh you did that. Suicide watch.'...I can't even count how many times I had even went on suicide watch...It was even to the point, almost every year, certain staff would be like, 'Let's go on suicide watch, I need Christmas money' [chuckle]... At that point, I'm like, 'Uh might as well', you know?...I just felt like I was just kinda working for the staff instead of just like actually getting any type of help and stuff.

Salma was indeed provided with mental healthcare while incarcerated, but participating often felt "useless." Salma reported it was hard for her to trust anyone that worked in the prison. At one point, Salma was given a journal to reflect on their sessions:

I was never really one to talk too much about my feelings, anyway. I never really felt too comfortable with like anybody to do that with... 'cause I remember one of my doctors, he gave me...a composition book... He used [to] give me like different prompts or like, 'Tell me a time when you were five years old, what made you sad?'...And then one of the staff, when they were searching my room, he decided he didn't like me that day or something so he took it and then he read everything. And then they just... The staff talked with staff and then they just kinda spread it to a good amount of people, like more than that one doctor it should have been for, you know?... After that doctor, I was actually pretty close to him, and then after that staff did that, I'm like, 'Man, forget this.'...I just took my medicine and that's it.

Salma especially struggled with regulating her emotions and being honest about how she was feeling given the facility's practices for dealing with youth on "suicide watch:"

All your stuff that'll make you comfortable and make you kinda probably feel better, they take it all from you...they (the staff) knew they could take everything from my room...[they] throw everything out...it's like your whole life in there...the only pictures you have of your family, your only couple of books, and drawings...they throw it, don't care if it's gonna mess up...or end up in the toilet...they...[couldn't] care less 'cause it's not theirs...it's your whole life and it's all gone because you told someone you were sad.

Salma's mental health continued to worsen, and she was eventually hospitalized in a state hospital. She reports that being at the psychiatric facility further traumatized her:

I was there for a month I think...I actually seen somebody air-lifted after...they had fought [someone] and the other person...basically threw him from the second tier...then I seen somebody commit suicide by jumping off the third tier...that stuff really messed me up.

The hope to be reunited with her family was critical to her ability to cope while incarcerated. Although her mother was only able to visit Salma once or twice a year, Salma felt that she had a better experience than others:

It was easier 'cause I had my Mom...a lot of girls in there don't have nobody...they're alone...they have nothing to look forward to when they get out. My mom wasn't on drugs and I had my family, you know what I mean? A lot of, like, teenagers and stuff in those situations don't have family or it's just a gang and all this and all that..., so, I

kinda, considered myself lucky in a way, lucky I was able to come out...with a good support system and all that.

Salma shared that although her time incarcerated was difficult and emotionally taxing, her release brought paranoia and feelings of overwhelm:

When I had got out it was...at first it was overwhelming. 'Cause I was like, 'The outside world' like— 'What the heck? I'm really out here.' Actually like for the first maybe about six months—maybe almost a year, I was...kind of paranoid... Like I used to think that they were just messing with me and they were gonna come back for me. Like I know that sounds...creepy kind of, but every time I seen a white van or like a police car, I'd just start crapping bricks. I'm like, 'They're coming for me.' [chuckle] ...and then like certain noises, like I just couldn't...if somebody shook keys by me...or like, the doors getting locked...you know how some of them make that loud lock noise?...that one used to just break me down every time I heard it. I'd just like start crying.

In the time Salma was incarcerated, her mother had become a paraprofessional at a suicide hotline. The training Salma's mother received in working with people experiencing mental health crises was helpful when supporting Salma during reintegration:

The way I see it she kinda like made it easier for me when I got out because she had already like dealt with the suicide hotline and everything before. So, ...I felt like she was kinda prepared for me to get out in a way.

Her mother also worked to lessen the changes Salma faced upon release:

For a little when I had got out, maybe a month...she kinda...stuck to the same schedule like I was locked up. Like in the morning, she used to...for like maybe a

month or two, she...woke me up, helped me with my meds... And then, we did like the breakfast, lunch, dinner around the same time like when I was locked up, and the showers and all of that.... She kinda stuck to the main ones like that, so that kinda made it easier too...to like get used to being out in real world...because it was just too different.

Salma related that being released from prison was an intense experience. She had to learn how to make her own decisions and become accustomed to being in charge of herself:

Making...little decisions [was hard] like...’What am I gonna wear?’, and stuff like that. ’Cause like, when you’re locked up all that is like, ‘Here. Put this on.’...’cause I had went in at a younger age, I went from my mom telling me what to do to the officers telling me what to do. And then getting out to my mom barely telling me little things like, ‘Okay, do this, do that.’ Then I’m like, ‘What do I do?’ I used to sit in my room when I had got out—waiting for my mom to tell me what to do next, like, ‘Can I move? Can I go to the bathroom?’

The greatest challenges to her reintegration, Salma shared, were emotional and mental-health related. Salma recounted the importance of and the challenges associated with attempting to continue her medication upon release:

The thing that messed me up when I had first got out was I ran out of medication...I ran out of medication before my [public insurance] was able...to go through. I [had been] on my medication for so long that when I didn't take it...I kinda felt off. So then when that happened, I had to go to...kinda like the 5150 place...And I had to go see a doctor, and have like a[n] emergency refill prescription. And that whole day I didn't leave my house. I didn't wanna chance me going out and somebody bumping into me

at the store or something so dumb...it could've set me off, and I would just...would've got sent back...So I just stayed in my house, scared.

Salma reports struggling even more with her emotions than she did prior to her incarceration, partly due to a sense of emotional disconnection or mismatch:

More now...my emotions are kinda off, like I don't even think my emotions know how to feel kinda, if that makes sense? I could be happy. Like inside, I could really actually feel happy but on the outside, I'm crying...[and] randomly, I'll just start laughing or just like random feelings and emotions that like the inside of me doesn't feel, but the outside of me is showing.

In addition to feeling disconnected from her emotions, Salma shared becoming easily overwhelmed by people after her time in solitary confinement:

After I had got my first um staff assault, I was isolated for maybe like nine months by myself. Then when they finally integrated me back with everybody else, I didn't even wanna be out there with everybody else.... even now, like, if you look (motioning behind her) my back window...[it] has a, a blanket over it—even now, I just like to be by myself and go in my room for hours because people overwhelm me.

When around her family, she reported feeling emotionally flooded and paranoid:

When I [would] go to like parties and stuff at my mom's house...I would just like go and listen to music. Like I can't...too many people go and people overwhelm me...I just get like, all like, 'What are they doing? Are they cops?' [chuckle]

Typical, daily tasks, like going grocery shopping or running errands where she will be around others feels almost impossible:

Sometimes I'll be like okay kinda and I could... Like go out with a good amount of

people and stuff like normal, but then like sometimes I just can't... Like going into Wal-Mart or, like Costco, or something there, Costco or something...I start, getting like, just, 'I can't be here, we gotta go... like I need air.'

Salma's consequent inability to be around other people continued to affect her more than a year after being released:

Right now, I really don't do much but clean my house like two, three times a day. And I leave my house maybe like three, four times a month to go to the stores and stuff that—go shopping. Like most of everything I get off Amazon anyway...I tried going to school—I'm gonna start going hopefully again this summertime but, I was thinking more maybe online first, so I could get used to it again, just because—like don't get me wrong—I like going to school and stuff but it just like... how many people there is there, I just—I can't...I'll like have a panic attack and just... 'I can't be here.' Like, you know?

Relationally, knowing “simple” things, like what to talk about and social norms around dressing and undressing made it difficult to connect with others:

These little random things that I would like not know... like music and stuff like...dressing and undressing... 'Cause when you're locked up, all the strip searches and all that...you're just like, 'Eh, whatever' ... taking my clothes off...not realizing I have to close the door...I used to feel isolated and everything even if I was around a lot of people I used to feel like I was kind of by myself. I don't know too much of what to do...I feel like I'm kinda slow and kinda stupid...because I never really like did like high school stuff, I guess? I didn't go to like parties and sneak out drinking and stuff like that...Like my social was by myself behind a door.

Salma's transition has included efforts to get mental healthcare to better manage her pre-incarceration emotional challenges as well as those which worsened during those seven years. However, Salma remarked that her experiences with mental health professionals have not been as helpful as she would have hoped. A disappointing experience with a therapist after disclosing she was formerly incarcerated was particularly striking:

the first lady I went to...she was kind of iffy...the first time after I had said that [I was formerly incarcerated]...she told me she had to go to the bathroom real quick, she came back, and she left the door cracked...which was weird because it was closed before...and she used to...like when we would talk and stuff...when she would ask me about stories when I was locked up...like the way she would look at me...like as if I was lying to her. Or like she used to kinda like—kinda twist me up, to get me [in a lie] ... I did not like that at all.

Later, she found someone she connected with, but the relationship ended suddenly:

One of them was better, I'm kinda more comfortable like chilling and talking with a guy therapist than like with a female therapist....he was cool and stuff. We like literally sat there, and like kinda talked and everything. And then he said, 'Okay, see you next time.' Next time I had a different one. I'm like, 'Ugh, he knew...I wasn't gonna ever see him again.' [chuckle] And like he knew that, he just really said, 'See you next time.' And he's not even here...

Eventually, Salma chose to accept minimal treatment and focus simply on what she feels she needs most: medication. Despite all the challenges reintegration has brought, Salma's described being released was like seeing the whole world for the first time:

...it was like—Have you seen like those commercials like everything is black and

white and then when somebody puts their glasses on, everything turns to color and beautiful?—It was kinda like that. Like everything just got really real. Like...I really couldn't believe it. I'm like, 'Oh my God, is this outside air?' [chuckle]

Salma reported recently being connected to a community of formerly incarcerated people through the local community college who understand what she has overcome and can relate to her experience. Salma shares she has been able to open up more, learn new things about herself, and see that there is hope despite being formerly incarcerated:

...to realize that I don't have to have that, 'Oh I was locked up before' label, like you know? Like it was just... It was so much easier. Man, like I usually look at them like, 'Dang, I wanna be like you when I grow up'. Like I can't think of [this professor's] name right now—she was formerly incarcerated, she did like 18, 19 years—and she just told us... that she was approved to go back in as a professor for college night class at...the same prison that she was at [before]. I met so many people like that—that are doctors and all this and all that now and it's like, 'Man...like if I wouldn't have known that you were locked up, I would never have even thought.' I kid you not...like everybody that gets out just needs that one person that actually was able...to get through it, and is on top now to just tell them that it's possible.

Angel

For Angel, a 34-year-old Mexican-American living in a large metropolitan city in the Western U.S., incarceration was a significant break from previous life circumstances. At the time of her arrest, Angel was in college with plans to go to law school. After a family financial emergency threatened to take the family home, Angel began to engage in financial crimes that eventually led to her arrest and conviction at 24. She served seven years in

federal prison and reported still facing and recovering from the emotional consequences of her incarceration, three years later.

Angel grew up with her mother and three uncles in a poor, rural community in the Western U.S. Angel's father had spent most of his own life in and out of custody and was not involved with Angel or their family. The family Angel grew up with was close, albeit conservative, as were most of the inhabitants of her community. She disclosed growing up feeling isolated in a number of ways:

I went to...a primary school, secondary and high school...where I was a minority—both culturally and ethnically, but also in my sexual orientation. I grew up in...a really small town—even within my family, I knew I could never disclose to anybody about my sexual orientation because I would be disowned...I guess, in a sense, I sort of accepted my lot in life that I'd never get to tell anybody...that I'd probably just become the tía who [chuckle] you know, 'Who's she dating?' like, 'Oh nobody.' You know, that kind of like spinster.

After Angel went to college, her mother began to struggle to keep up with mortgage payments on their home and Angel's began engaging in financial crimes:

I tried to get along on my own [but] I was denied more [financial] aid, so that's when my desperation really kicked in. I didn't want us to lose our house 'cause it was the first time my mom had ever been able to own a house after...many, many years of working two jobs. I've been working since I was 10...and I was like, 'Well, where can I get money?' So, I decided to start [financial crime]. And so, I [did] several and then the last one... I was arrested at gunpoint. I was pretty sure I was gonna die...and from there I went into custody.

Angel's time in prison was spent in a number of different facilities, from low-security to high-security, each brought with it different experiences:

Low security...that was, by far, the easiest of all my time because I didn't have to...like, I didn't have to wear shackles or handcuffs to move around and I didn't have to be escorted. I got to see the sun, I got to see the sky, I got to see grass. I had a work detail that I got to walk to by myself... the most challenging time was when I was in the different county jails and also at the [medium and high security] facilities.

Angel shared that her appearance made her a target. She stated she had to start fighting to stay safe, which caused her to end up in solitary confinement as punishment:

I think just my appearance made me look very young and back then, umm part of like, my, I guess, performance to the world...I had very long hair, so I think that made me look a little more juvenile, too. So, I got picked on constantly by, you know, some other people in custody...And so, I found myself fighting a lot to...stay safe and that became really hard, too, because when I would get in trouble, I would get...good time knocked off...and [have to] spend a lot of time in solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement, for Angel, was one of the most challenging and impactful parts of her incarceration, leading to feelings of loneliness and fear that she was going "crazy:"

[It was] really hard, I felt I was gonna go crazy (crying)... I remember thinking like if I make it out alive, I just hope...that like I'm still able to remember what it's like...to be human (crying), you know. And so, that was a big fear for me 'cause like, at that time...my biggest source of access outside of my own psyche was books...But like the book cart wouldn't always come around, and so, that became really, really tough. And, you know, I think unfortunately, now, I'm still unpacking...having been alone

for so long.

Angel survived several bouts in solitary confinement, most of them five to six months long, but one, after a particularly bad fight, lasted over a year, and was the most emotionally draining:

I mean it was like extreme sensory deprivation and...I remember like being fed through the slot...in the door and...I would be hopeful that I would get a friendly CO [correctional officer] who, when I said thank you, would say something back, so I could just hear somebody else (crying)...I remember I went to medical once—they had the radio on—and that was the first time in like a long time I had heard music and I broke down...really badly.

A sense of being emotionally alone, in addition to being physically alone, was strengthened in solitary:

I remember sometimes being able to laugh at myself because if I didn't have a book, I didn't have anyone to have conversations with [chuckle]. So I'd like have conversations in my head... I think all of those things reinforced that I only had myself...I only had myself to keep me hopeful and sane. There was a time I got really depressed and that was probably the closest I ever got to feeling suicidal...I think it was more—it was definitely [a feeling of] hopelessness.

Angel shared that the already lonely and taxing experience of solitary confinement became a nightmare when she was sexually assaulted by a prison staff member:

The incidents of sexual violence from a male correctional officer toward me...that happened while I was in solitary confinement...that was really scary because that also put in my mind like, I really am alone (crying), like there's no one here for me

(crying)...

This experience led to suicidal thoughts:

I was on the edge of starting to feel a little suicidal...especially after like umm, the incidents of sexual uh violence that I experienced. I don't know, something in me was like, 'No.' Like, 'Do I, do I wanna live?' I remember asking myself like, 'Do you wanna live?' 'Yes.' 'Okay, so what do you need to do to stay alive?'

Part of the commitment Angel made with herself involved practicing a strict routine that helped her feel a sense of control and order in her life. Once out of solitary confinement, Angel applied this routine to her life amongst the general population in the prison:

I felt weirdly good about the way I was living because it almost became like monastic living for me...I got up, I had a routine, I would exercise, I would read, I'd go to my work detail...a huge outlet for me was to exercise.

Angel also began to tutor women in the prison, helping her feel, although still guarded, like part of a community:

For me, like the women I tutored, I never asked them for anything in return. And that was honest, you know, they would ask me, 'Why not?' And I would say like, 'You know, I had a chance to go to school, like this is like a privilege I've had, like I feel it's my responsibility to help other people.' Umm, and so on their own, they would bring me stuff or I'd wake up and there'd be something like outside my cell, and so I think because I didn't know who had left it, like there was nothing owed...Which felt really nice...'cause other than the money I made like in my work detail, I didn't have anybody putting money on my books.

Tutoring was a powerful way for Angel to feel connected, albeit still fearful of being taken

advantage of:

[It] was nice 'cause people appreciated me...I think that helped people maybe look out for me even if I wasn't aware...But I always drew very, very strict boundaries, like to what I would consider deeper friendships—I never let myself have a deep friendship with anybody. I guess I was afraid of being taken advantage of...like if someone did a favor for me... How I would have to pay them back? That's just how it [prison] is.

This approach to interpersonal relationships, although necessary and even protective while Angel was incarcerated, proved to create challenges once released:

I think most recently like, the biggest consequence of not having yet completely taken down my armor and not isolating was: I ended a two-year romantic relationship with my partner because...umm, there's a lot I still haven't healed from and...I would vacillate between feeling like we were really a team and that she had my back, to when we would have conflict, feeling like, 'Nope, I'm all by myself.' I can't trust anyone...anytime I thought there was gonna be some sort of like consequence for having an argument or disagreement... My system automatically expected that the outcome would be punishment...so, I tried to avoid punishment so much that I, uh, wasn't always honest...that created a lot of issues for us.

Getting out of prison proved to compound the socioemotional challenges of incarceration and transition with those of interacting with the for-profit prison and reintegration sector:

When I was released I had to spend six months in a halfway house...and to put it lightly, that place did not set me up for any sort of success or stability. I got to recognize very quickly what their profit strategy was. There was like a lot of overcrowding and one of the things that they would do, for example...[was] try and

pump people up to get excited about going to home confinement without revealing...how often they'd have to drive back to that halfway house to report...because you still were obligated to pay the halfway house 25% of your gross earnings even though you were no longer staying there, and say...I just get released, and then I come in to the bed you used to sleep in, now they're getting money from both of us once we both get a job.

For Angel, it became clear that reintegration that would financially benefit the halfway house were a greater priority than other forms of reintegration:

I started to see, you know, very quickly how on paper things were said to be a certain way, but in practice, they were far different. I remember wanting to find out about like going back to college or what my options were and anytime I put in the permission slip to go out the next day...if I needed it for school things, I would get like maybe an hour, and an hour was not enough time for me to walk down to the local campus...even see a counselor and come back. But anytime I put in a [slip] for work, they gave me like four or five hours...they were always pushing me to get a job so they could get money.

Angel's experience at the halfway house was further complicated by the lack of support services available and the lack of a trauma-sensitive structure:

There should have been at least one social worker there, there wasn't...people could roam the halls... and you know like residents could walk around...without being monitored...male and female residents all together. Luckily, you know, nothing there ever came to a really extreme situation, but it was hard to not get depressed and get triggered because it really brought up for me things that happened while I was

incarcerated, including [the] sexual violence...I heard through the rumor mill that some of the staff were sexually involved with some of the residents...so it stressed me out...sometimes I would come back to like come-ons [from male residents] and just stuff I didn't want to deal with.

Paying restitution, in addition to the financial obligations she had to the halfway house, became a significant obstacle to reintegration for Angel. The fear of potentially being sent back to prison served as a barrier to even exploring what her options were:

One of the challenges was like trying to find a place to live because even though I was working...I was also paying restitution. And my goal became to pay my restitution off by the time I was done with supervision. Umm, and... I didn't start digging into the law very much [but] I met...a sweet old man...he became a legal beagle when he was in custody. And he was like, 'You know you didn't have to pay that.' ...but I was really—I was so scared. I didn't wanna go back. I was like, 'I just wanted to pay it off.' So...it didn't leave a lot of money for...anything, really—I remember even rooms for rent were out of my reach.

In addition to the financial and social stressors of living at the halfway house, Angel was obligated to receive mental healthcare. However, Angel shares that the fact that the therapist would be reporting to the same system that confined her was too difficult to overcome.

Participating in therapy became nothing more than another requirement of release:

I remember like while I was at the halfway house, I was obligated to go to see the mental health agency that—I don't know if it was the halfway house that contracted with them, or if it was BOP directly that contracted with them? But those mental health services... I think it was also because I was really guarded, but I was like, 'I'm

not gonna tell these people what's going on with me. They're gonna directly report to my probation officer.' I was like, 'No, hell no.' But I would go physically, so it could look like I was complying. But I didn't tell them anything. And so, I started to have a really negative relationship with counseling because...culturally, like I'd never thought about counseling before...and it just—everything became like a survival strategy to just try to make it through my six months—I think something that would have been really helpful for me would have been to be able to find my own mental health provider, versus the one that was contracting to provide services while I was in the halfway house.

Angel shared that the reentry services provided upon release failed to provide her with the skills and support necessary to facilitate her transition and she experienced homelessness upon release from the halfway house:

There was like a little kitchen [where] I'd go to work. I worked midnight to 8AM but I would usually come around 10 and the worker who was already on for the swing...they were really cool and so they let me like hang out in the staff lounge until my shift would start. By the time I left the halfway house, I started going to community college, so, I would take classes, I would power nap, and then I would stay at the library 'til 7:30 when it closed...and then I would usually walk around until...the place I was working was open... my day-to-day was occupied by that...I didn't leave a lot of bandwidth to my existential angst...other than feeling really lonely—that was really hard, feeling lonely.

Angel's reintegration experiences were highly influenced by the intersectionality of her identities as a formerly incarcerated queer Latinx. Despite the felt inadequacy of the services

offered at the halfway house Angel was released to, the city provided a supportive environment in which she found affirming queer communities of color:

I would say the one huge benefit that came from being released to [city] was... [it] has a quite strong queer presence of color...and I decided not to go back to [hometown] and I tried my luck out here.... I still live in [city]...even like in my time being homeless...and being food and housing insecure...I'd never experienced a place like [city]. So, I remember telling myself, 'I've made it this far, I made it out alive like. I do not wanna go back in the closet... never again. I've been through way too much.' So, I didn't. And then eventually, you know, I started presenting like my authentic self, which I guess in other terms, would be like traditionally masculine.

Angel shared that her gender non-conforming presentation creates a sense of being a target for violence, policing, and surveillance post-release, commenting:

I am hyper-aware of others surveilling me...because people who are queer in either orientation or appearance are also considered hyper-sexual and even like predatory...I know that that only puts me at greater risk of ending up in a situation where I am sent back [to prison] ... so I'm really careful and I'm mindful of all that, you know.

Angel went on to share that with her family, her sexual orientation and status as formerly incarcerated was closely associated:

My mom and my sister had a really hard time with [my identity] for years...and I was unable to talk to them about it...the best [my mom] could explain it was that...because homophobia [was] instilled in her because of the way she grew up in Mexico...what I would call hyper-patriarchy...Catholicism and all that, she started to associate having a daughter who was formerly incarcerated as a negative that was also linked to my

sexual orientation... So, to her, both were embarrassing and things she didn't want like the rest of our family to know about so that took like a lot of years to start to mend. The opportunity to live more fully in her identities was validated and strengthened by the people and the material Angel was exposed to in community college:

When I met a professor at community college, I started to see...themes came up in our classes that were things that I had experienced, but I'd never talked about them with anybody...I remember [the professor] would say things like, 'The personal is the political,' and like, you know, I read like Anzaldúa and a bunch of literature from radical Chicanas, and I was like, 'Oh my God, I wish I had like a tía like this.' You know like, who would have talked to me like this...And so I started to feel really affirmed and really seen.

Having such affirming examples of Latinx culture and identity around her was in stark contrast to how Angel grew up and the complicated way she viewed herself as a cultural being:

I grew up in a really hard duality of feeling ashamed about certain things culturally...how I associated certain things and wanting to escape that...Like I remember even in roll call...all my teachers...seemed to think my name was way too hard to pronounce...and that was really ingrained in me that my name was hard...but like on the flip side, I was really proud of certain things about my culture, and I always associated being a really hard worker, like my mom, with being cultural. The fact that... there was no job too big or too small, like I could figure out how to do all of them. And I saw a lot of my classmates kind of punk out when things were hard, and I'm like, 'You fools have tutors, like English is your first language, like the fuck,

get it together.’ So, I had a chip on my shoulder and I wanted to prove something when I was younger, and so growing up, I guess my pride and my shame around certain things about my culture...they were always in conflict with one another. Being exposed to Latinx communities after release that were accepting and nonjudgmental towards Angel and her multiple identities was healing:

[This professor] was also the first person I disclosed to, and she was really embracing and non-judgmental...I really loved that through [her] I got to meet other Latinx folks who were lawyers and educators and artists...that was really lovely. You know, I think growing up, what was hardest was, like besides myself and my sister, I didn’t know any other Latinx people who were going to school or going to college, anybody who was different in any way. Like my mom only went to school, I think, ’til like the fourth or fifth grade, so I didn’t have any positive examples of other Latinx professionals...both people I assumed queer and otherwise...when I was released, identifying and embracing as Latinx became a really beautiful source of pride and strength.

Eventually, Angel was exposed to enough of a network to find longer-term employment and find a more stable place to live. Despite these incredible gains, Angel still felt unsure of how to develop relationships with others given the challenges related to her status as formerly incarcerated:

For a while, it made me nervous [that] if I made a friend...I didn’t know how I was gonna tell them that I was in supervision, or I shouldn’t tell them, like if it was any of their business, and I was like, ‘Okay. Well, I can’t accept a ride from anybody because, if for some reason, we get pulled over like...If they ask if any one in the car’s

on supervision, like I can't lie. But then, my friend's gonna think I'm lying', so I will work myself into like, like a frenzy, and I was like, 'Oh, it's just better not to talk to anybody.'

The experience of being incarcerated and not feeling safe to be her authentic self growing up, continued to affect Angel's ability to approach relationships and interactions with others:

I think [incarceration] did impact me...I felt really scared to make myself emotionally vulnerable to a relationship of any kind, whether it be friendship or certainly anything romantic. Especially 'cause I still had a lot of issues with coming out...I became really afraid of trying to be social, like pro-social. Like, I was afraid that I had forgotten how to [relate and interact]. But, I also started realizing like, I've actually never been authentic with anyone in my life, because the people I grew up around I was in the closet around them.

Angel shares that confinement marked a significant and long-term change in her life, something that continues to affect how she sees herself today:

...[while I was in college] I continued to live at home, and so being incarcerated was the first time I was not only living outside the house but like, by myself in every way possible. And it was really tough...I joke with my friends that sometimes I feel...very underdeveloped in certain stages. You know like, I didn't have my first romantic relationship 'til I was into my 30s, you know like...In those ways, I feel very green, but in other ways I sometimes feel like I'm 100 'cause I feel like... I've seen things that people should never see.

Given Angel's interests in the nonprofit sector, and connections with individuals who were aware of her formerly incarcerated status, finding employment was not as difficult as she had

anticipated. At the time of the interview, she had been able to secure work where her formerly incarcerated status was known and not a problem or simply not something that was inquired about or disclosed. Despite her initial financial difficulties, for Angel, the greater challenge has been in managing the social and emotional impacts that incarceration left her with:

I still find myself...like having to remember to reach out to people...being triggered and having flashbacks and nightmares of being taken back into custody. It's something that I still am, you know, dealing with...and I [sometimes feel] really paranoid and triggered...it's traumatic—like it fucking sucks...you suffer a lot for a long time afterward.

For Angel, her reintegration experiences are a reflection of a systemically ineffective approach to rehabilitation:

I think starting with the concept of reintegration and I say that because...post-release, I didn't feel like I was reintegrating, I felt like I was integrating for the first time... 'Cause when I was younger I... didn't have the language to call it community but I always longed for something that I knew I didn't have...and it wasn't 'til I got to [city] that I had it. I think the same way about the concept of rehabilitation, like, some people haven't been habilitated—ever. Which is exactly why they land in custodial settings...

Angel shared that reintegration should include formerly incarcerated individuals at the helm:

I think for me, it makes sense that people who were formerly incarcerated have a chance to be social workers, and clinicians, and probation officers. They're the people who are actually gonna do the best job in helping people to successfully satisfy their

terms of probation or even support them in early termination of probation... also, in like understanding the trauma and the pain of being incarcerated.

Ultimately, Angel shared that she has become more comfortable sharing her story and sees this as evidence of healing, strength, and triumph:

the fact that I've had a chance to practice talking to people about my experience and... write about it in classes has been extremely helpful for me to make sense of things, versus like, I think had I talked to you a few years ago, as soon as I introduce myself, I probably would have started sobbing....I would have had tears and snot like rolling down my face and I may have even had a panic attack... getting to tell people that part of me and have them not judge me and embrace me, all of that has also helped me...I know it's all a testament to what I have overcome to get to where I am today and not just like... 'That shit was painful and fucked up.'

Teodoro

Teodoro was a 47-year old entrepreneur born in Mexico who had immigrated before he was one-year-old. He grew up in a large, coastal city in the Western United States.

Teodoro was “raised on the streets” and became involved with gangs shortly after his mother died when he was 11-years-old. His father suffered from alcoholism and was “fairly absent” throughout Teodoro’s childhood. The streets, according to Teodoro, became a space for him to find the direction and support he felt he was missing at home. Teodoro reported a long history with the penal system throughout his adolescence and adulthood that culminated in his last incarceration of 12 years. This last incarceration, four years before the time of his interview, was a turning point for Teodoro:

...the reason for that is: I was incarcerated after being on the run for over a year...that same month, when I was in jail, my father passed away—and my father and I were very, very close. I'm the youngest and it was always my desire to get out and take care of him. Through all my incarcerations, my dad had always been there. He had always taken care of me. You know, uh, for all his faults and flaws. You know, he was still dad. You know? Despite whether I was right or wrong, he always loved me. So, um, that had a tremendous impact on me...I realized things had to change...I couldn't do [it] anymore.

Although this last incarceration was a turning point, Teodoro remarked that his earlier incarcerations had longer-term emotional impacts:

Early on I would say it had a dramatic impact because I was emotionally immature...I was a child...I went through a lot of hard times because I was in love with my first wife... you know, and we went through a lot of pain and hurt with that relationship throughout my different terms....and I was away from my children. I was away from everything and I didn't know how to deal with [all those] things emotionally—that impacted me for a long time.

He described this inability to deal with his emotions was facilitated and strengthened by his involvement in prison gangs:

I think what may have carried me through some of the earlier incarcerations, is being involved in gangs, because you have a certain kind of machismo...and it became a survival instinct, a tool that I was able to use to survive...to keep those difficult emotions out of my head...and thankfully, because I mean prison is the way it is, you do have to participate in some sort of uh, gang activity, you know, prison gangs...and

all that just kept me from really dealing with what I was feeling and what I was doing to others.

The realities of surviving within the prison culture further served to emotionally “harden”

Teodoro:

There were private moments when I was sad. There was times when I really just hated life. And you know, I would cry. I missed my family...I missed my kids, I missed my wife. You know, I ended up knowing that my wife was cheating, you know, and that—it was painful. It was painful and hurtful...but you still have to survive in prison, you know, and sometimes you put on a front...to protect yourself—to keep from showing weakness, because in there, weakness makes you a target—and so you become that much more hardened.

This emotional shrouding, Teodoro believes, leads to lack of emotional development that makes reintegration difficult:

I think a lot of inmates that are incarcerated, umm they're emotionally stunted...emotionally stunted where there is a need to have to have somebody to be in a relationship with. They don't know how to relate to themselves at all...we're thirsty for love and acceptance...there's a lot of uh self-centered needy individuals. And I haven't found a way to progress beyond that. I think that's a real block. A blockade from focusing on the things that will keep [us] out of prison and actually heal and participate in the community...because we end up doing things for acceptance that only keep us doing the same things that got us [in prison] in the first place.

Teodoro shared that the lack of resources in prison are a significant problem and often are directly opposed to positive change:

There's a great lack of programming in prison. You know, people...they like to believe, oh, well, while you're there, you can go to school, you can learn, you know, you can do this and that. But the reality is that it's not like [that]...you have to wait in line, sometimes you have to be assigned to them, and if there's no available spots, you're assigned to whatever they give to you, and sometimes there's no assignments at all. So, you're just left doing nothing...and you can't go to a library in there and just find whatever book you're looking for. Often, there are no books, and I think because of the digital age that's becoming even more so...it leaves too much time to fall into the wrong things and it creates a really vicious cycle.

Teodoro shared that even the programs that he participated in to lessen his time were spaces of “temptation” to engage in activity that was not conducive to “doing good”:

... [there was this] rehab program and... while I didn't wanna do it, it did give me an extra several months off of my time, so I had to go every day. The [rehab] program itself...they were having a lot of staffing problems. There was staff that was smuggling in drugs, there was a lot of...just a lot of issues with the staff—abuse from staff...it was not a good environment...not at all.

Despite the problems with the rehab program, Teodoro shared he started considering change after interactions with one instructor:

I was very fortunate that the instructor that I had...towards the end, she was very, very helpful, very patient, very understanding. She really cared about her students and it was that compassion that really helped me to build some positive change...to see that there was a point to doing better and that I could actually do better.

Teodoro decided to redirect the skills and knowledge he had developed over “a life of crime” to starting his own business—something he started working on while incarcerated:

...I became a student of trying to learn about committing fraud...and the more I treated it as a profession, the more I realized it was akin to investigating because I would learn every single detail about someone whose identity I was going to be using, or a corporation that I wanted to take over their accounts, and it was always...my hope that one day I would be able to get out and provide...services to prevent someone from being...ripped off, from having their information stolen...I knew that I could use the savvy that I had once applied to committing my crimes, to prevent them and actually do something helpful for the community and make money off of it...clean money...this definitely kept me busy, because I had nothing else to do while I was locked up...and I became very proficient at it.

After 12 years in prison, Teodoro was released and for the first time, he was not on parole.

Teodoro remembers:

...this was a stunner for me because I've always been on parole. I've never once not been on parole, and I guess due to the way they sentenced me, I ended up doing... I don't know, they gave me too much credits or whatever, so I was automatically discharged and it was very new to me...I didn't have to report to nobody. I didn't have any type of holds or anything that could just automatically send me back to prison. That was very freeing.

The prospect of getting out brought on the challenges of finding housing and employment:

When I first got out...I didn't know where I was gonna be. I only had a few hundred dollars at the time... I didn't know where I was gonna go...I didn't know what I'm

gonna do...I don't have any family. I'm not from [city], but I have to come to [city] because this is where my daughter's at...she was with some...temporary guardianship. I ended up contacting a pastor who had a men's home...and he agreed to rent me a room there in the house for, you know, a few hundred dollars a month...and I started working for him...odd jobs here and there.

Teodoro shared that this opportunity helped him in his commitment to break from previous patterns and “do better this time”:

...whether it's family, or...services that are provided to inmates. You know, there needs to be some sort of support system that one can take advantage of. I was fortunate that I had some of that this time that I got out. I didn't have that before. I honestly believe if I didn't find that place to live...I would have been in dire straits. You know 'cause I mean just finding the place to live is difficult—it's tremendous. I was very fortunate. I didn't have to fall back on crime to survive this time—I could actually do better this time like I wanted to...

Reintegration was also marked by a sense of guilt and a need to make up for lost time with his family as a man:

There's a lot of things that you have to let go of. So, for me personally, it was guilt—a tremendous amount of guilt. Especially as a man...when you leave the world—you're incarcerated—you've left behind a lot for everyone else to take care of...I've always put a lot of burden on my shoulders to handle responsibility. I'll take care of the bills...I'll protect us...so, I felt very guilty for [being gone], and when I get out, I'm always trying to make up for that, which leads to more crime. Because if you're trying to provide for a family and you have no marketable talents, you're like, ‘Well, what's

left? A life of crime. I can go to make money easily, that's not a problem.' You know? So, it's that pressure. We take on a lot of responsibility [when we get out]... especially as Hispanic men we, uhh, we're providers...it's imbued in us.

The emotional shrouding and need to mask weakness that was strengthened and was adaptive during incarceration, created a hindrance for Teodoro during re-entry:

It's very hard to manage because you still have this mentality where you don't want nobody to see that you're struggling or stressing, but you are, and you're trying to figure out how to navigate...how to make it, you know, and it's like, 'Don't worry baby, I'll take care of the bills. You don't have to worry about that no more,' or even your parents, 'I'm gonna take care of my parents, you know, I'll be their provider' ...you want to make up for all the time you were gone...and it's a lot to handle. That's...a hindrance...not being able to admit that we just can't do it.

That pressure, Teodoro suggested, creates a sense of urgency that makes engagement in reintegration support services much more difficult:

All these different organizations that exist are so disparate, and separate...there's no one-stop shop...so...these places involve time, you know? And a lack of time is what a lot of formerly incarcerated believe they don't have. Because you are so under pressure when you first get out, 'What am I gonna do?' And sometimes you are under actual pressure. I don't have a place to live. Where am I gonna eat? You know.

Where am I gonna get clothes? You know, and it's hard.

Fundamentally, Teodoro shared that what was most supportive for his successful reintegration was viewing himself as capable of doing so:

I've always had a great belief in my capabilities.... I was the one that everybody knew was gonna grow up to be different—that was gonna be successful...and I thought that, too, you know? But then after my mom died, everything just went downhill, and I don't know, but everybody still believed in me and everybody still had that belief in me. I just had to get over my own obstacles that I put in front of me...it took a lot of time and a lot of tragedy—Ultimately, I needed to get over myself...and the thought that I couldn't do it.

Instilling hope and a greater sense of self-efficacy, Teodoro believes, can be particularly helpful during reintegration:

I think at the root of it all there just needs to be hope...and real strong support. There needs to be a safety net for people that are discouraged, that don't believe in themselves to say, 'Hey, look...I was in the same place that you were, I understand exactly, you can do this. You can do this...I got some contacts right here. Call these people. You need some clothes, they'll hook you up with some clothes.' I get a little emotional just thinking about this because...it proves to me that there are second chances for a lot of us...that there are people that absolutely care...and [it was] that encouragement that made me really want to take that leap forward...and really change.

Ultimately, for Teodoro, a community-based approach was the best for supporting him and, he believes, is the best for supporting formerly incarcerated folks in general:

I can definitely say that now from the personal experience of what helped me and that I've had in organizing those types of things. I absolutely believe it's possible, but it's a group effort. It's a community effort. Yeah, it takes a village. And I hate saying

that, it sounds so contrived...but that's what's needed, a village of people to believe in the person and show them forgiveness is available to them...understanding is available to them...that's all we need.

Rey

Rey, who at the time of the interview, was living in a large city in the Western U.S., was a 46-year-old self-identified Chicano. He grew up in a large, metropolitan city in the Western U.S. and was incarcerated from the age of 15 to 43. Rey was released after legislation in his home state passed that provided eligibility for parole to those serving sentences for crimes committed before the age of 23. Rey was incarcerated for a total of 28 years, the last 12 of which were spent in solitary confinement. Rey describes growing up “a very angry kid” during a time in which his neighborhood was particularly dangerous and run by gangs:

I actually grew up in the early '80s...it was a really bad time in [city]... So, for me growing up in a low-income area with drugs, prostitutes, gangs, violence, domestic violence all around me, and then living in a home, a dysfunctional home with my parents...my mom was an alcoholic, my dad was co-dependent, always trying to be the hero for my mom... I understand now just because of the work I have done that I grew up a very angry kid...I hated [my mom], I hated my parents...so as soon as I can climb out that window, I was gone. 12, 13 years old, I was out the window.

Rey described being exposed to violence, both in and outside the home, desensitized him at a very young age:

In my house...I witnessed domestic violence, I witnessed verbal abuse and all those things...and still like...those things didn't make me who I became...but I understand

that now that they were part of—pieces of me...that were real [and went] together to point me in a certain direction. My dad really tried...they even tried to send me to Mexico—very, very much, he tried, but I got involved in street and crime gangs. Some of the first memories that I have as a kid are of gang violence—guys getting stabbed, fighting, shooting...So, it was normal to me. Basically, I was very desensitized.

Rey shared that his inability to manage and work through his emotions was facilitated by his engagement with violence:

In a sense, I liked having fun...and I never had any restrictions. So, I was very undisciplined...I never learned how to control my emotions. I never learned how to work through them. So, everything was always like, 'Boom, boom, boom...' and so that development of behavior right there, really carried through—I was very violent all the way up to probably age 28, 29...Even though the violence was now directed at an enemy gang or an enemy prison gang or a race...it was that same feeling that I got from being 13 and walking around with a handgun...

This violence, ultimately, led to a crime that would sentence Rey to life in prison without the possibility of parole at 15. He shared:

I didn't know how to deal with that (crime). Mentally, I didn't know how to face it. I didn't know what it looked like. I didn't know, I had no sense of value of life—like none. Um, so I didn't understand the magnitude of my crime, the impact of my crime. So, when I went into juvenile hall, arrested for this crime... I was thrown in a hole (solitary confinement) ...So, I'm scared, I'm confused, I'm sad—I look back now and I

was like, "Man, I fell into a depression." I had all the signs... So, I went into survival mode, and the only thing I can hold unto was the lifestyle and what was around me. Rey remembered that these complicated feelings and the messages he was getting about who he was only served to entrench negative behavior:

And so, I continued moving forward on that path from juvenile hall, you know, and it was a time that crime was really going up...there was this term that they used—they describe the kids, um—killers in that way...predators...and then I took it and that's who I was. I ran with it and I rebelled against my parents, I rebelled against the system. I rebelled against justice...anything that was right...I was angry. I was angry at myself. I was angry because of what happened. I was angry because...that (the crime) should have never happened. Um, and literally I just blocked it and I knew that I was gonna live and die in prison...so I might as well keep being the predator everyone was saying I was, this predator I now believed I was.

Rey shared that being incarcerated at such a young age forced him to make adaptations to survive in prison:

...it taught me how to survive [in that setting] ...you know at a very young age. I learned how to be very manipulative—I learned how to be violent—in a way that I hadn't been before, uh, 'cause I really had to push myself to do some of the things that I did at the beginning...because I was scared. I wouldn't admit it. Nobody would believe it, like they just thought that I was some crazy gang-banger kid. But really, I was a scared kid. Period. And that's the only way that I knew that I was gonna survive.

Those adaptations Rey made to survive in prison eventually led him to be recruited by a prison gang:

As soon as I got to the county [and] I hit 18, they pulled me over and they were like, 'Hey man,' ... 'We see something in you,' like, 'Your peers follow you' ...so now, I'm thinking I am wearing...this badge of honor, you know, inside of prison which was all false and just a warped way of thinking, [but]...when these older gentlemen come tell you, 'Hey, man, we're gonna groom you, we're gonna teach you the ropes' ...you gravitate to it...and for a long time in prison, I was just running on pride and ego.

That's all that mattered to me...so I developed this false sense of being.

This "false sense of being", Rey shared, had deep emotional and psychological consequences:

It really had like a deep psychological effect on me, uh, because I justified it. I learned how to justify my behavior and my actions...to the point where like I can sit there and debate with you. You know, and then you even get into it...so from 18, 19, 20, the way that you survive in prison, what I did is I found a direction. ...I found in juvenile hall, uh, they threw me in with more sophisticated criminals. I shouldn't say criminals. [chuckle] Well, we were criminals but we were kids, right? But they were more seasoned than I was...I learned from them—I got caught up in that world.

Rey was so caught up in this world, that at 22-years-old, he was sentenced to a second life term and was validated an associate of a violent prison gang, both of which later resulted in his sentencing to solitary confinement for the rest of his life. Rey related he had already accepted that he was going to spend the rest of his life in prison, and so the only thing that

really mattered was his standing and reputation in that world. The drive to “become someone,” Rey shared, helped him to survive his time in isolation:

I was very lost for a long time of my life. Psychologically though, I think I managed to survive because I had goals. I had a drive to become someone. So, I applied that energy in that way. It kept me busy. I wasn't idle sitting in some depression...along those ways, I found other things: literature, history, you know...I used to play Jeopardy. Like...you find ways to pass the time...but at the end of the day, you know, I became that image I had of myself—wanting to be this gangster inside of prison.

That's who I became.

Rey spent the last 12 years of his prison term in solitary confinement, something he shares he is still healing from today. Rey described disconnecting from his emotions in order to survive the isolation of the SHU:

I'm still healing from it. Umm, it's always gonna be with me...because I never gave myself permission to understand it...I've been out two and a half years. Um, and...it's one thing when you're inside prison and you think about your family having a birthday party or you look on TV—and you're stuck in a cell 23 hours a day—so you don't allow yourself to connect. You just see it like, ‘Oh that looks pretty. Those are pretty lights... Oh, that's a nice turkey dinner.’—but you don't connect emotionally. So, coming home and connecting emotionally and being at a birthday party...[or] a wedding and being with your family, you know I've had to take a lot of time...Um, and just breathe, [laughter] just breathe...because it's overwhelming.

Rey pointed to “life altering events” that created the conditions for facing and healing from his crime:

My first life altering event was the day I committed my crime, and the impact that had on me. The second...life altering event...I sat in the SHU and I told myself, "Okay. This is where I wanted to get since the age of 16." I had this image of this person that I wanted to be...and now I was that person, and I started seeing some things that weren't what I had imagined would be. I started to question, "Was this all that life was meant for me?" Then, at that same moment, I began educating myself for the first time in my life...my family really reached out towards me for the first time in a long time, and I was tired (of the life) ...with all those things, I finally found the strength and the maturity to think about the day that I committed my crime.

Truly facing the crime, Rey observed, is what finally allowed him to disentangle himself from the gang life:

I walked back to the scene of the crime, and for the first time in my life, I sat down and I read the medical reports. I envisioned what that crime scene was like. I had dreams of people standing around a grave site and lowering the casket, and I had never ever dreamed that...it caused me so much internal pain...that I literally...I fell (crying). For the first time in my life, since that time I committed my crime, like 22 years later... I grieved for my victim...and so once those things came to me, I went inside and I wrote a letter to all the head gang members [in the prison] and I explained to them why I was no longer gonna be a part of an organization—I told them that basically I was useless to them.

Rey shared that disassociating himself from “the lifestyle” was not easy, but what helped him was a notion that there was something greater:

It was very hard...some of these individuals were friends that I grew up with in the system since I was 16...we had come together this far—they were my brothers. They still are my brothers. I love them. But I could no longer continue living in that world. Because I knew it was wrong—I don't know how religious you are or you're not, but—I had an epiphany...like I have to continue making good choices, and [crying] I know one day, I'm gonna see (the victim) again—I just felt that if I continued, then what would be the point? That was the decision that I made and—I was jumped, I was stabbed, I was written off—but by that point, you know, it didn't matter to me, like if I lived or died...Because I knew that I was gonna be okay. I knew there was something bigger or greater.

After disassociating himself from the gang, Rey spent an additional 4 years in solitary before hearing about new legislation that reversed his previous ineligibility for parole given his age at the time of the crimes he committed. The process of building an application for parole took an additional two years. At 43 years old, after 28 years in prison, Rey was released:

Oh my God! [chuckle] First...I want you to imagine the first time that... I was released from the SHU after 12 years—from solitary confinement...it's really sad... But I remember stepping out from that institution, and I saw the open sky... it scared me. Like, I literally felt... like I ducked a little bit, to an open sky...I'll never forget that feeling...it was almost like a little part of me wanted to go back inside. But by that time, I had come a long ways, 'cause it took me about two years to get released from prison... while I went through their vetting process. So, when I stepped out of the SHU, I was ready for a new life.

Rey's transition out of prison was highly facilitated by his family, who provided him with the tools and the ability to get his bearings after spending most of his life incarcerated:

I had a huge help and support—I would not be here where I'm at today...when I came home I had a family who was stable enough to support me while I figured out what I wanted to do. Umm, so I didn't have to pay rent, I didn't have to, you know, buy food...like literally everything was given to me at the beginning: a cellphone, a room... My uncles chipped in and bought me a laptop...so, having that stability and that foundation helped me...gave me time to enroll in college, to apply for jobs—those things really helped me.

In addition to his family, Rey was introduced to a network of formerly incarcerated people that also supported him in his transition:

I got really fortunate because it wasn't just support from my family, meeting X...he introduced me to a support network. And so once I started tapping into that network, I was like, 'Woah, shoot, like I can really plug into all these people.' You know, and then that network grew into a bigger network... and before I knew it I had all these people that...were just as impacted. That's what really helped me...find my footing.

Despite the support from his family and network of formerly incarcerated people he was connected to, Rey struggled during his transition. His time in solitary confinement, especially, made his efforts to socially connect with others particularly challenging:

You learn how to be very alone...how to survive alone—alone in your thoughts, alone physically, mentally. So it's very difficult when you come out here in society. And then you have to make all these different type of connections...I didn't know how to differentiate between a professional relationship with my woman supervisor...and my

girlfriend. Like, I didn't know that... those are two separate lanes, I understand now, you know. I had some, I've had a little bit of repercussion happen to me because...I made a remark or, you know, whatever. But it's because I didn't know those different interpersonal relationship skills...and the only way you can do it is through practice. The discipline and strict routine he employed to survive his years in solitary, proved to be very helpful in navigating his transition:

To survive in that setting, you have to maintain a discipline, a routine...so you work out every morning, you watch the news from this time to this time, you read a book from this time to this time, you study a curriculum from this time to this time, you write letters from this time to this time, and then you draw from this time to this time....and that's how it is—that's how you survive, that's the only way you're gonna come out of it with some sanity...and so that has helped me out here because now I'm applying the same discipline.

What Rey felt he lacked most “was in interpersonal skills and emotional control.” Rey shared that part of his transition involved learning how to navigate social relationships, especially in his romantic relationships with women:

[It was] not too good at the beginning...and that happens to most men. You know, 'cause you wanna come out here and you wanna play the field... I mean, just think about it, I was 16. How much experience did I have? It's almost a joke, right? I think I had just got finished looking at Playboy bunny magazines or something like that...so finding the understanding of commitment in a relationship... being able to view women as individuals...and not [just] an attractive person...was really a challenge for me, like the first year and a half...there's a value...that you learn to relationships, to

women, to people, that you can't develop in prison. You have some sense of it. But there's no way you know.

Education played a significant role in Rey's ability to develop interpersonal and social skills, and understand the way his life experiences have impacted him emotionally:

What really help me again is the education piece. Like taking a course on interpersonal relationships, understanding child development...or emotional intelligence. Reading those things and really internalizing them helped me, gave me some guidance as to where I needed to practice, what I needed to develop. Why, you know, I didn't feel it was inappropriate to call my supervisor beautiful one morning, you know? I also learned that everybody's different psychologically. Like some things that impact me will not impact another person as much. Some things that impact them, I will not feel that same impact...everybody [is different].

Rey's efforts led him to explore his own cultural identity. Education, here again, was key:

It's funny because in order to feel Chicano I had to feel American first. I didn't know what I was—I knew I was Mexican... but during that time that I had disassociated myself from the prison gangs, I started reading a lot about history, I started noticing a lot of Mexicans in platoon leadership roles in Vietnam...I read about Medal of Honor winners and so forth... So, I began to understand like, 'Okay, wait a minute, like they're Mexican like me.' I studied the Constitution... I understood like freedom is not free. I began to understand that there is literally an army protecting us 24 hours a day... I became very mindful of it. Um, and so maybe because in a crazy way, I understand sacrifice, or I understand what you can do when you believe in a cause or...I also understand what other people can do when they believe in a cause. Umm,

and what they can do to you if that cause is not, you know, your cause...so, finally for the first time in my life, while I was still in prison, I felt American.

For Rey, this was in stark contrast to the way that he had developed his own understanding of cultural pride in the prison and gang culture:

You know, growing up, in the Mexican culture and being called a *pocho*...or zoot-suiter which I was like, ‘What the hell is that?’ Because I dressed like a *cholo*... it's very confusing, and because you're brown and you're not Mexican enough...you're not American enough. So, there's like this confusion...and so what happens is you find your identity in the street gang...or in a lifestyle. So, when that happens, you never understand...who you are. You're [just] this lifestyle.

This cultural pride that is associated with a gang/prison lifestyle, Rey believed, also creates challenges for many formerly incarcerated individuals making efforts at reintegration:

Inside a prison culture, there's a false sense of pride. Um, and for like, I don't know if it stems from like the Mexican machismo or whatever... there's this huge pride and ego thing...inside of prison...you kind of become like homogeneous... and again you're not social. So that also translates, 'cause you carry that same mindset... when you're released, you still see everybody in those categories—that doesn't change. You know, whites are still whites... black[s] are still black[s]. They're separate and not together. So, you still come out of that place with that prison mentality... it's something that even in our organization we struggle with—diversity. It's a challenge.

The more expansive cultural awareness that Rey developed thanks to education helped usher in a sense of empowerment and self-knowledge that strengthened him as he navigated, and continues to navigate, the challenges of reintegration:

I really felt empowered, but that empowerment came through education. I kinda started thinking, ‘Man, that's really something society lacks, or my people lack’: Self-empowerment, in part because there's lack of education. When I took my first college course when I got home, it was Chicano Studies, and it just blew me away. I began to understand where all the class...status came from...so all those thing[s] was like eye-opening for me. I think that's what makes me good at what I do. But obviously, I would not never be able to do these things unless I had find my own identity. So, to me, finding your own identity it's everything...you don't have a direction unless you know who you are...and so once I figured out who I was, I'm pretty unstoppable now.

Rey’s critical awareness and education around the complexity of culture and identity has helped him be more sensitive to the more painful realities of being formerly incarcerated and Chicax:

The stigma that our own Chicano people... our own Mexican people put on us when we come to prison. Sad to say, and I see this in mostly all the families, but when you come out of prison, the people that are more scared of you is your family, when it comes to a Chicano or Mexicano family...they will ostracize you, with a snap... it goes back to...tradition and culture...of being the man...I even see it for women—they have to be the matriarch, and...to have all these things together—and for the men, you have to be working and bring a paycheck... [because] you're a man, you have to be in charge of your household, you know. If you're not in-charge of your household, then you're not—you're not cutting it.

These cultural nuances, Rey suggested, could be lessened by offering greater support not just to formerly incarcerated individuals but to their families as well:

I think some of the challenge is because there is no support services...for families...to understand that when Rey comes home, he is gonna be this way or he's gonna suffer from these things. Instead, our families and... especially in our culture, I feel in the Chicano culture, we really have set... this bar—you know, of how Mexican/Chicano man has to be, and if you're not there [at the bar], you get mentally fucked.

For Rey, although his family was a huge source of support, there were cultural challenges to navigate upon his return from prison:

...like my family literally treated me like I was 16 when I came back home, because that's who they remember, you know? My mom and dad were happy to have me home, but they were still coming into my room and tucking me in (laughing). I think it's much more difficult when you have all these cultural dilemmas, right? That get in the way, you know, of communication. And for, like my family, I got arrested and then they just never talked about it. Because that's how we handle things—that's how Hispanic families, Mexican families...that's how they handle things.

These cultural challenges were only exacerbated by the way that Rey had learned to handle his emotions in prison:

I'll give you an example, when I have a situation [where I get emotionally overwhelmed] I would kind of detach myself from the family unit and kinda just go sit in my corner...I was comfortable [alone]... But my family was like (gesture of confusion). What they don't understand is that that's how I've learned to process, and so—it's two different languages going on there. They take that as a disrespect, they'll take it as me telling them, giving them the finger, they'll take it all kinds of ways.

Like wait a minute, you know, I'm just right here... [processing, but] they don't understand that.

Further, the cultural values and relationship between family and honor, according to Rey, further complicates the experience of formerly incarcerated Chicanos and their families:

I think one of the things that the men—Chicano men struggle with when they come home is—learning how to forgive. Because like I said, once you're arrested... you're a tarnish, right? You were this mark on the family, you let the family down and... Oh my God, the neighbors know what happened. So now you had to move to another neighborhood...or you're that family whose kid...went to prison...So, you get disowned for all these years, except for maybe your mom, and dad and sister, but all your uncles and aunts are gonna disown you. You know, they don't, they're not going to want nothing to do with you, but now you come back home and they all wanna be a part of your life... so you have to figure out a way to not let that emotion develop into something. Because it's gonna be there...and we need to heal and talk about it as a family.

Rey's connections in the formerly incarcerated community ultimately helped him to obtain a position in a nonprofit organization that provides services for recently released individuals. His work offers the opportunity to use himself as an example of the power of second chances and forgiveness. He notes the importance of setting an example and understanding the pressure that many Chicano men, particularly, feel upon release:

Being an example. That's just like number one, because if I can't walk the walk, I'm not gonna talk the talk... the other part for the Chicano man...is not to put so much pressure on yourself. You know, and I'm guilty of that—I have two jobs for a reason.

It's not because I need the money now, it's because I feel that it's my responsibility to take care of my parents—and that's a big lift... if you're not working and you can't pay your bills, and if you don't get it together within the first six months like...you can start reverting back and making some very bad choices and decisions in life. Umm, 'cause you're putting all that pressure on yourself... and I think that has to do... 'Cause I don't see another culture put those expectations...they have different, you know, issues.

Rey shared that in this new space he can use his own experiences, awareness, and sense of the cultural knowledge to support others. Seeing the connections between his own experiences and those of others has led to a commitment to change the system from within:

...it really put it in black and white that, you know, it wasn't just by chance that I grew up in this poverty...it wasn't just by chance that I lived around gangs, or you know, it was part of a plan that then took on its own umm...evolution, right? But it was something that started from something—from somewhere. Just having that unique understanding gave me the ability to understand that in order to create transformation I have to have one foot [in the system] and one foot out. I'm not gonna change re-entry from without, but I can change it from within.

Rey ends with sharing that he is still the same person he was when he was younger, but with a more positive direction in life:

I'm applying the same discipline, but just in good things...in a good focus. I have the same energy and the same drive, but now applying it into... like the person that I always should have been... I'm not the new me, I'm the old me. You know, people

say, 'Man, you're like a new man.' I'm like, 'That was me. That was me when I was nine and 10 years old. I just got lost.' you know?

Margo

Margo, a third generation Mexican-American mother of two, grew up in a small, impoverished, rural community in the Western U.S., where she currently lives with her daughters and extended family. Margo became involved with gangs and “hard” drugs at the age of 22, after starting a “toxic, abusive” off-and-on relationship with the father of her children. Margo describes growing up in a “decent family environment,” going to church every Sunday, participating in sports, and doing well academically. As a teenager, Margo began to experiment with drugs, and was introduced to methamphetamines at 24, which she quickly became addicted to.

Margo began “catching small cases trying to make money to get my drugs”, and was eventually sentenced to three years in jail. After serving 14 months, Margo was released under the condition that she complete a 9-month inpatient drug rehabilitation program. At the time of the interview, Margo had been back home for a little over 4 years. For Margo, being incarcerated came as “a culture shock:”

When I went to jail, it was definitely a culture shock because I had never done jail time like that. It was really, really crazy, really, really mentally challenging for me too because I was amongst a bunch of girls that were, you know, just far out there really—I mean, there was fights in there all day. It was cold in the winter. It was really hot in the summer—it definitely changed me. It definitely hardened me when I got out.

Margo shared feeling broken by incarceration:

Emotionally, it broke me, because I was separated from my daughters and my family. It broke me down to what I used to be...to what I was then at that point, you know? I feel deep down inside that's not who I am. I did those cases 'cause I was high on drugs, but I'm not that person. I'm not like that. I felt terrible about myself—I felt scared, nervous all the time...it was bad.

The emotional challenges of being incarcerated were only compounded by the fears of what the conviction meant for her future:

It impacted me because I was really, really scared. I was scared because I didn't know how I was gonna get a job. I didn't know how this was gonna affect me in family court. I didn't know how this was gonna affect me...because like I told you I was hanging out with gang members and when I came out... I was totally scared. I think they validated me a gang member on my paperwork—I've never been in a gang, but they validated me as a gang member because my co-defendant was a gang member...I was scared what that would mean to the gang when I got out.

Being validated as a gang member despite not being in a gang affected not just Margo, but her family as well:

... [being validated] affected me really bad... I came home to my mom's house. We had to turn away a bunch of friends...they couldn't be seen talking to anyone that was related to someone in a gang or nothing either...I felt like I was always hiding. I felt like... I was in an identity crisis. I know it sounds really far out but I really did feel like that. You know, I didn't know who I was, what to do.

This sense of an identity crisis was compounded by traumatic experiences she had while in jail. These memories, and their emotional consequences, continue to affect her two years after her release:

I feel like I had a lot of trauma too...because there was so many fights in there...you know, when I came out, anything that I seen, anything close or near to some[thing] I had seen in there. I was traumatized—so many things just went down in there that... I seriously thought it was gonna happen wherever I was at: at stores, just stuff like that... there was a couple of girls I saw get jumped really bad in there...then there was some sexual stuff going on in there, so it was just...really crazy, really ugly...so it's impacted me a lot—I sometimes still think about that.

That trauma Margo experienced has even impacted how she parents her daughters:

Sometimes like the stuff that goes on there, I always say it could easily happen out here, it can happen anywhere. And so I always, like, really protective of my daughters and my niece too, and they're always like, 'Oh my God, you're so paranoid. Why are you always like that,' you know? So, I know—when they ask me that, I know that I must have been traumatized because—I think of those things all time.

The fear of possibly returning to jail changed the way that Margo related to others socially upon release. Further, a sense of not knowing “how to act around people” kept her from engaging with others:

When I got out for the first year or so...or even actually still, in my head, I thought, 'When I get out, I'm cutting myself off from everybody. I don't wanna deal with anybody.' I was scared. I'm not gonna deal with any of my old friends, because for one, they were all bad and they're using drugs. And then, two, I guess, just a trust

issue. So I kind of isolated myself the first year here at my mom's house...I didn't go out. I don't wanna go to family barbecues—I didn't know how to act around people, and I just was afraid of even coming in contact with people.

The fear of returning to jail, the inherent challenges associated with socially relating, and a sense of guilt for lost time with her daughters, lead Margo to approach her life in “extreme” ways:

I don't balance it out where like, ‘Okay, I need social time, friends, family, barbecues, maybe dating.’ Instead of just balancing it out, I go to the extreme where it's all or nothing. So right now, it's nothing, it's like no friends, no people. I don't know, I kind of fixated it in my head where like if I go out, maybe I'll run into some old friends, or maybe I'll get into a problem and maybe catch a case. I know that it's extreme and, unhealthy, but then I kind of feel too...when I went to jail, I left my kids, my daughters behind and I didn't provide for them...and so when I got out, I think that I have to work all this time. I got to get this education so that I can land a good job, so that I can provide for my daughters...everything else is kind off to the side.

The stigma of being formerly incarcerated creates another challenge for Margo. The label of “convicted felon” feels like an almost impossible burden to overcome:

I kinda want to be socially accepted and change my whole life around, but in a way, I felt like I [won't ever] because I had been labeled a felon...before I got [this current job], I was labeled a convicted felon. So, the jobs that I were applying for, I was getting the job offers, but once they ran my background, I was turned away... Like, ‘No, absolutely not, you can't have the job.’ And so, I thought if I get educated, and I

put myself little bit higher, will I fit in more? And it's still a no because I'm still getting penalized for being a felon.

This sense of not being able to escape her past is everywhere for Margo:

Even to this day, like if you Google my picture, you see my mug shot, and it's really, really bad. I was like 100 pounds. I had all these scars on my face. I looked cracked out... I'm gonna get my associates degree in May. And that feels like that's not enough. So, if I keep going to school, being educated, is that gonna help me? ...that picture is still going to be up there...it breaks me... it hurts emotionally...it puts me right back where they want to hold me—labeled. Sometimes, I think, ‘Okay, well, maybe I'll just stay where they want me to. Get a mediocre job, just whatever, spin my wheels and stay quiet.’—that's how it breaks me.

Margo shared feeling “all over the place” during her first year back home, creating a discrepancy between how she viewed herself and how others viewed her:

...after getting rejected constantly, I wanted to be hard and act that way [that they were expecting from me], so that's why I say I was kind of like all over the place [for a while]... I couldn't really identify who I was, what I was. Was I the old Margo—never out of school, with two parents, a good lifestyle—or was I this thug, [a] criminal? I was...a statistic...of the dope fiend, dope mom. I left my kids behind. I was on meth. You know, all this stuff... and still to this day sometimes I feel like I don't fit in a lot of places—like I am always struggling with who I am.

This sense that the stigma of being formerly incarcerated is incessant was especially frustrating and emotionally challenging to Margo:

I'm applying for these jobs and it's always a no because of my background. Once my criminal background is checked, I fall right back into that thug category. So, it's like... how many convicted felons are doing what I'm doing? Like I passed probation with flying colors. I got my kids back... I'm sober for five years. Um, you know, I got education on me. I'm grabbing all these things that most felons don't do because they always go back. I'm that small percentage that is not going back, but I still don't reap any benefits from it...how long does that hang over my head? So, emotionally, some days I'm down and out, and it's like, what do I do? I feel like I'm spinning in circles. How I deal with is? It breaks me sometimes.

Despite the challenges of reintegration, Margo contends that the inpatient drug treatment she was required to undergo as a condition of her release was pivotal to her ability to emotionally handle release:

When I came out... Luckily, I went to a Christian-based rehabilitation center, and I had tried to get myself into rehab on my own before that, and there were always like 30 days, 60-day, in and out rehabs, outpatient, and none of them really worked, but this was a nine-month Christian-based one. So that kind of emotionally lifted me up [after that year in jail], it helped me out a lot...to deal with all this.

Margo shares that this inpatient program she participated in provided her with skills, counseling, and a soft transition that made re-entry less of a shock:

I think I had this extra...soft transitioning rather than just being thrown right back into society...they taught me how to deal with my emotions, how to deal with anger, I had anger classes, I had drug and alcohol classes, I had...how to get back on my feet in the job world... I had counseling with my kids, I had [financial counseling]—All these

things, all these tools that they prepared me with—to get back into life... [and] slowly push me back into society.

For Margo, this “soft” transition and its positive effects on her reintegration became especially clear when her brother came home from prison. Margo’s brother was one of her co-defendants and served significantly more time than Margo did. For her brother, who was released under parole and with no transition services, things have been challenging:

With my brother coming back—my brother's already threatened to fight me. He has all this built-up animosity. He's really angry. He's already been back on the ankle monitor. It's been only seven months...his parenting skills, I mean, I don't know... It's just a lot different. And so, me transitioning...[with] that program, it really helped me. I think that if I didn't have that, honest to God, I really feel like I would be struggling like my brother, I'd have been right back out on the streets on drugs. I wouldn't have seen my kids. I probably would have lost custody again—the transition's really, really hard.

For Margo, then, the key to successful reintegration programs are such that, like the one she participated in, teach skills and provide tools and counseling to manage the inevitable challenges of re-entry. She shared that these types of programs are sorely missing in prison, and by her own experience, in jails:

I wish that there was more out there, like right when people get out... I know that there's a lot of stuff I read that are in prison that they claim is offered, but it's not offered at all in county jail...I have found out that... [prison is] supposed to be rehabilitation, but I don't see how it is [laughter]. I've looked at some statistics about the population in prison, how many people are in there for drugs, and I don't see any

rehabilitation in there... I have a lot of people that I know that have been...in prison... because when I was in there...all I did was write to a bunch of homies and... all I ever hear about is nothing but gangbanging ...fights...they're sleeping all day long—I don't hear about no rehabilitation going on—and that's the problem.

An essential component for Margo, given the challenges she has faced dealing with the emotional consequences of being incarcerated and the stigma associated with it, has been hope. In her transition, hope came in the form of the Christian values of the inpatient program she participated in:

For me...the Christianity part [of the rehabilitation program], gave me hope, the faith gave me hope. I went back to my stomping grounds where my family embedded into me church and it gave me hope [that] I had a higher power to look towards...that I was being forgiven, I had a second chance.

Hope, Margo suggests, could also be fomented by showing positive images of formerly incarcerated people and the possibilities after incarceration:

If they spoke about formerly incarcerated people in there it would give them hope. It'll say, 'Hey, when I get out, I know there's others like me...I have an option. I can go this way, or I can go that way. I have a chance. These people did it, these people are doing it. I could [also] do that...' If there was some hope or stories...talking about formerly incarcerated people...that they can go to college. I think that would give us some more hope. I wish that that was offered in county jail. Not waiting just 'til we hit prison and then there's maybe a program. Yeah, it should be offered in any type of incarceration.

Margo shared that cultural values around strength and positivity has helped her deal with the socioemotional challenges of incarceration and reintegration:

Well, first off, my sobriety...always kept me having a clear vision...and then... my mom has her Master's and she always pushed college... so, you know, I had that, and I've always been feisty and [chuckle] I had that, you know, engraved into my DNA I guess from my grandma... you know maybe that's part of a... I always say that's a Latina thing, too [chuckle], you know? Always having to fight for what you want...being positive. Fighting for your family and your kids and your future...

Margo's identity as a Latina is closely linked to her Catholicism and the values of forgiveness and redemption:

I kind of added them together, Latina and my Catholicism. ...So when I say bring it back to my roots like when I swayed away from that when I was on drugs, I wasn't out there praying or saying the name of the Father. Uh, so when I got back into it at the rehab, I felt like I was connected back to where I first started, and I felt the sense of connection and I felt like a cleansing...I felt a chance to start over and I knew that in Catholicism you can be forgiven—I see that a lot in being Mexican—forgiveness, so I kind of connect that with that.

This opportunity at forgiveness and redemption that Margo shares are given to her by Catholicism and her identity as a Latina is not one she feels she gets in “society”:

...that all really helped me when I was shunned [for having a record]: feeling like I was able to be forgiven again... I feel like in society, I'm not forgiven, always held up to what I've done wrong...and that's another thing...it definitely crosses my mind every other day. Is [the stigma] ever gonna go away? I'm afraid to think that, you

know, even five years from now, I might still be held to that and never be forgiven but I think that I should be forgiven for that. I think society should forgive me for that already. I've worked hard... I've come far.

Talking about what she has gone through is hard, but Margo shares that she has noticed herself healing as she has been able to talk more about her experiences:

Like when I got out of jail, I just wanted to move on and get away from all that stuff, and I didn't wanna look back or remember it...my family would ask me about stuff like that—when I first got out—and, I really didn't wanna talk about it because it just brought up a lot of old stuff that I just wanted to completely cut off. But the more that I started learning about things and wanting to be an advocate for others, it doesn't bother me to repeat what has happened. I feel stronger now than I have been before, so it doesn't really bother me anymore. I see myself growing that way...If anything it gives me more energy, it amps me to want to help others.

Analysis and Interview Themes

The following section presents findings in the context of superordinate (overall) themes from participants' accounts of their experiences of being formerly incarcerated. Themes were developed after consideration of emergent patterns within and across individual participant narratives. Superordinate themes are presented and broken down into subthemes that are connected to participant accounts. As per IPA's attention to the ideographic (Smith et al., 2009), themes are not solely identified through repetition across cases but as relevant to individual participants and their unique contextual experiences and understandings, in other words, also by their significance. Table 2 below organizes themes and superordinate themes.

Table 2. Themes & Subthemes

Superordinate (Overall) Theme	Definition	Subthemes
<i>Psychological Impacts of Incarceration</i>	socioemotional experiences and mental health-related consequences identified as directly linked to incarceration experience	<i>Worsening Mental Health</i>
		<i>Emotional Disconnection</i>
		<i>Interpersonal Distrust</i>
		<i>Feeling Socioemotionally Underdeveloped</i>
		<i>Long-Term Emotional Consequences of Isolation</i>
<i>Challenges of Reintegration</i>	barriers, both socioemotional and logistic, identified as associated with reintegration efforts and experiences	<i>Feeling Overwhelmed</i>
		<i>Sense of Social Isolation / Disconnection During Re-Entry</i>
		<i>Navigating Stigma of Incarceration</i>
<i>Experiences with Support Services</i>	participants' interactions with services broadly defined as including institutions of confinement (prisons and jails), halfway houses, supervisory services (probation or parole), mental health services, and community support organizations (i.e. churches, non-profits, and community colleges)	<i>Negative Experiences with Mental Health Providers</i>
		<i>Lack of Programming and Non-Mental Health Related Support Services in Confinement Settings</i>

		<i>Mixed Experiences with Support Services during Re-Entry</i>
		<i>Education at Community Colleges</i>
<i>Role of Cultural and or Social Identities</i>	role that participants' ethnic identities, gender identities, sexual orientation, and/or age, played in experiences of incarceration and reintegration	<i>Guilt or Pressure Associated with Gender Identity</i>
		<i>Mixed Role of Cultural Identity</i>
		<i>Challenges and Strengths Associated with Intersectional Identities</i>

Psychological Impacts of Incarceration. The theme of *Psychological Impacts of Incarceration* involved socioemotional experiences and mental health-related consequences that participants identified as being directly linked to their experience of incarceration. Subthemes included (1) *Worsening Mental Health*, (2) *Emotional Disconnection*, (3) *Interpersonal Distrust*, (4) *Feeling Socioemotionally Underdeveloped*, and (5) *Long-Term Emotional Consequences of Isolation*.

Participants discussed a sense of *Worsening Mental Health* while incarcerated, defined as a subjective sense of a decline in psychological well-being during incarceration. For some participants, such as Salma, Rey, and Margo, their mental health was something that they struggled with prior to incarceration (familial and relational trauma-related distress,

emotional and behavioral dysregulation, substance use disorders). These pre-existing emotional challenges, participants shared, were maintained, and often worsened, during incarceration. Salma's pre-existing PTSD symptomology, for example, was worsened by additional trauma exposures she endured in prison (physical assault by and to staff members, witnessing suicides and physical assaults, extended time in isolation). Rey's emotional and behavioral dysregulation was strengthened by the need to fight and engage in violence to "survive" in prison, as well as the internalization of the negative view that others had of him (i.e. being labelled and internalization of the term "predator"). Others, like Angel and Margo, felt that their mental health worsened as a result of their confinement. Angel's suicidal thinking, paranoia, and trauma-related distress, for example, developed after the "extreme sensory deprivation" of solitary and being sexually assaulted by a prison staff. Margo's hypervigilance, paranoia, and trauma-related distress developed after witnessing and living in constant fear of physical and sexual assaults while serving her sentence in county jail.

Relatedly, participants identified a sense of needing to *Disconnect from their Emotions* to cope with the challenges of incarceration during and after their time confined. For Salma, this took the form of avoiding interactions with other people and feeling a mismatch between what emotions she felt and expressed to others. Rey endorsed disconnecting from his emotions, intellectualizing his experiences, and lack of experiences, as a means of surviving 12 years in solitary confinement. For Teodoro, disconnecting from his emotions was key to his ability to manage the death of his father during his last incarceration and cope with the pain of his wife's infidelity and abandonment during his sentence. The need to suppress emotions during incarceration to prevent themselves from

being perceived as weak and become targets of violence during incarceration, was also discussed by participants.

The nature of prison and confinement settings also created a *Sense of Interpersonal Distrust* in participants. Angel's preoccupation with not being taken advantage of by others kept her from developing any friendships or relationships that may have been supportive while incarcerated, and made social interactions and relationship building while reintegrating a fearful and challenging experience. For Margo, the physical and sexual assaults that she witnessed while incarcerated led to present "paranoia" and suspicion in others, impacting even how she parents and interacts with her daughters. For Salma, the interpersonal distrust she feels around people impacted her ability to leave her home, interact with her family, and secure employment.

A sense of *Feeling Socioemotionally Underdeveloped* as a result of the length and/or timing of their incarceration, was also discussed by participants as a consequence of incarceration. For Rey, spending 28 years of his life in custody, and having done so since the age of 15, made it difficult to develop the relational and emotional skills expected of him as a man in his 40s. Salma, having been incarcerated at 14, also highlighted a sense of feeling underdeveloped in understanding her identity and navigating social and romantic relationships, compared to peers her age (22 years old). Teodoro suggested that being "emotionally stunted" as a result of incarceration creates a "block" for many formerly incarcerated people to make changes in their lives for fear of losing the sense of connection and acceptance that they already have. Finally, Angel identified both the time she spent incarcerated and having "come out of the closet" later in her life, as reasons for why she felt

emotionally and relationally underdeveloped, specifically in romantic relationships and in the exploration of her identity as person who is gender non-conforming.

Finally, participants shared significant *Long-Term Effects of Isolation*, known as solitary confinement and frequently referred to by participants as “the hole” or SHU (segregated housing unit). Salma, Rey, and Angel, for instance, reported having difficulty in social situations and in being around others after their extended stays in isolation. Salma’s difficulty being around others, in addition to trauma-related symptoms, has kept her in her home with limited outside and social engagement, where she finds herself mimicking the darkness of “the hole” by covering her bedroom window with a blanket. This has continued more than a year after her release. Rey and Angel both reported still healing from the effects of their isolation, more than three years after each of their releases. The long-term effects of solitary confinement that were identified by participants included hypervigilance, anxiety, panic attacks, and a paradoxical need to be alone for extended periods of time to avoid social overstimulation or overwhelm.

Challenges of Reintegration. The theme of *Challenges of Reintegration* included the barriers, both socioemotional and logistic, that participants identified as being associated with their reintegration efforts and experiences. Subthemes include (1) *Feeling Overwhelmed*, (2) *a Sense of Social Isolation/Disconnection During Re-Entry*, and (3) *Navigating the Stigma of Incarceration*.

A sense of *Feeling Overwhelmed* upon release was identified by participants in a number of ways. Salma described feeling overwhelmed with feelings of anxiety and paranoia, worrying that she would be sent back to prison at every turn. Participants also shared feeling overwhelmed with the lifestyle and relational changes that accompany release

(i.e. being able to make their own decisions, engaging with unknown people in public, interacting with family and friends at gatherings, etc.). Rey and Teodoro further reported feeling emotionally overwhelmed upon release, specifically around expectations they and their families placed on them to find work and provide for their families as men. Finally, participants related being overwhelmed at the logistical obstacles and challenges of re-entry (i.e. navigating safety and rules within halfway houses or other re-entry support services, finding employment, securing housing while paying restitution, etc.).

Social connections and engagement also proved to be a significant challenge during reintegration for participants in this study. Specifically, *a Sense of Social Isolation/Disconnection During Re-Entry* were described. Participants disclosed difficulty connecting and not knowing how to interact with others after incarceration, something that was particularly the case for those that spent time in isolation or solitary confinement. For Salma, a lack of typical adolescent experiences (going to high school, making friends, etc.), in addition to the anxiety and paranoia associated with being around people after her time in solitary confinement, made relationship building with others challenging. Angel described her difficulty being vulnerable with others and being truthful for fear of being judged or punished as reasons for social isolation and loneliness during re-entry. Rey and Teodoro reported social isolation resulting from difficulties building and navigating relationships given their limited experience with people and norms outside of prison.

In addition to the socioemotional and logistic challenges of reintegration, participants identified *Navigating the Stigma of Incarceration*, as particularly trying. For Margo, the stigma of having been formerly incarcerated limited her employment opportunities, her comfort with seeking social support programs (subsidized housing, public health insurance,

etc.) and led to feeling that she was “spinning her wheels,” a sense of hopelessness about her future, and of being “broken.” Stigma, as Rey suggested, is often not only an issue with employers and community members, but can also be found in Latino families, where an individual who is formerly incarcerated can be seen as tarnishing the family name and honor. The stigma of being formerly incarcerated also influenced the way participants viewed themselves, their opportunities, and their goals for the future.

Experiences with Support Services. This theme involved participants’ interactions with support services. Support services was broadly defined as including institutions of confinement (prisons and jails), halfway houses, supervisory services (probation or parole), mental health services, and community support organizations (i.e. churches, community colleges). Subthemes include (1) *Negative Experiences with Mental Health Providers*, (2) *Lack of Programming and Non-Mental Health Related Support Services in Confinement Settings*, (3) *Mixed Experiences with Support Services during Re-Entry*, and (4) *Effects of Education at Community Colleges*.

Negative Experiences with Mental Health Providers, both within and outside of correctional settings, were identified by participants as relevant to their experiences during incarceration and reintegration. Participants disclosed experiences with mental health providers who were inconsistent, distrustful, or weary of them because of their formerly incarcerated status. Salma, for example, reported experiences with mental health providers who she felt were trying to “catch” her lying or who were visibly uncomfortable with her after learning she had been incarcerated. For Angel, counseling already felt culturally alien, and disclosing traumatic and painful experiences to people who worked for the Bureau of Prisons or the halfway house felt unsafe. Participants also highlighted that working with

mental health providers that reported to probation or the prison administration made trusting and fully participating in their services, both while incarcerated and during reintegration, feel prohibitively risky.

A Lack of Programming and Support Services in Confinement Settings were identified by participants as an obstacle to effective reintegration. Participants shared that programming was offered at some facilities, but such programming often felt deficient because of a lack of sufficient spots for interested individuals, a dearth of resources (books to engage in educational programming, for instance), and what felt like arbitrary cancellations of offerings that made participation close to impossible. Teodoro, specifically, recounted a lack of books and materials to engage in college correspondence courses at his facility, and partook in a drug rehabilitation program while incarcerated he felt was “a farce” staffed by people selling drugs to participants. Other participants identified a disparity between the programming available to those in jail versus prison, exemplified by the disparate programming offerings and reintegration experiences recounted by Margo between herself (who served her sentence in a county jail) and her brother (who served his in a state prison).

Further, participants identified *Mixed Experiences with Support Services during Re-Entry*. Participants highlighted experiences with halfway houses and other re-entry support services that were financially, psychologically, and logistically unhelpful. Angel, for example, shared that her experience at a halfway house felt more financially exploitative than supportive. The fact that the dwelling was mixed-gender where sexual harassment and activity occurred between staff and residents further created an environment where Angel felt physically unsafe and triggered given past sexual trauma. For Margo, on the other hand, the nine-month inpatient drug rehabilitation program she was required to participate in helped

her emotionally process her experience of incarceration and provided helpful tools that were integral to her reintegration. For Rey, re-entry services that are psychologically- and culturally-informed and provide practical tools to formerly incarcerated individuals were critical to his reintegration and the work that he has decided to dedicate himself to.

Finally, the *Effects of Education at Community Colleges* were highlighted by participants who engaged in this resource. Specifically, participants reported feeling that the communities, information, and people they were exposed to in community college facilitated their understanding of their experiences as formerly incarcerated in affirming ways. For Angel, Rey, and Margo, community college, and the education they have received there, helped cultivate hope regarding their potential as formerly incarcerated people, and led to deeper understandings of their lives from a social, structural and psychological perspective. The accessibility of community college, both in terms of financial and educational requisites, were identified by participants as especially valuable given their overall limited educational histories and economic resources.

Role of Cultural and/or other Social Identities. This theme included the role that participants' ethnic identities, gender identities, sexual orientation, and/or age, played in their experiences of incarceration and reintegration. Subthemes include (1) *Guilt or Pressure Associated with Gender Identity*, (2) *the Mixed Role of Cultural Identity*, and (3) *Challenges and Strengths Associated with Intersectional Identities*.

Participants shared a *Sense of Guilt Associated with their Respective Gender Identities* that impacted their experiences of reintegration. Teodoro, for example, expressed that the guilt surrounding his inability to provide for his wife and children “as a Hispanic man” while incarcerated, made it difficult for him to abstain from criminal activity during

reintegration because of “pressure” to make up for lost time. Rey also endorsed feeling guilt and pressure given his values of being a provider and supporting his parents as a man now that he was out of prison. Relatedly, Margo disclosed feeling guilty for not caring or providing for her daughters during her time incarcerated, something that she felt was instilled in her as important values “as a woman and as a mother.” This guilt pushed Margo to power through the challenges of reintegration and focus on fulfilling these obligations to her children, even to “the extreme” by ignoring her own needs and well-being (i.e. isolating herself, limiting relationships with peers, etc.).

The Mixed Role of Cultural Identity in participants’ incarceration and reintegration experiences also emerged as a theme. Cultural identity was jointly defined by participants and the researcher as including however participants made sense of and embodied their identities as Latinx/Chicanx, a requirement for participation in the present study. Participants disclosed experiences of feeling culturally isolated and ashamed for being Latinx prior to incarceration, which for Rey, was part of what led to and kept him attached to the “gang life” where a clear identity and sense of belonging were available to him. Later, when developing a richer understanding of his cultural identity through education, Rey was able to accommodate a more empowered and prosocial approach to cultural identity and pride as a Chicano that supported his success during reintegration. Relatedly, Mexican cultural values and norms were also a challenge when attempting to reconnect with his family, who misunderstood his need to be alone and emotionally withdraw when overwhelmed as signs of disrespect or disconnection. For Angel, on the other hand, for whom culture and cultural identity had always been a source of conflicted feelings of pride and shame, developing a more affirming relationship with her identity as a Latinx person was immensely beneficial to

her ability to reintegrate. Being around positive and welcoming individuals that were also Latinx helped her negotiate the complicated feelings she had around her sexual orientation and gender presentation, cultural identity, and later, her status as formerly incarcerated. Distinctly, for Salma and Teodoro, culture was not identified as important to their experience of incarceration or reintegration. Salma, specifically, related that being Mexican-American felt less impactful to her experiences incarcerated and during reintegration than her mental health challenges. Her Latina identity was something she connected more to family practices, music, and foods, than she did to specific experiences and values that impacted her experience as a formerly incarcerated woman of color.

Finally, participants discussed *Challenges and Strengths Associated with their Intersectional Identities*. Particularly, Margo and Teodoro's identities as parents were central to their commitment to reintegration. For Teodoro, his relationship with his youngest daughter was something he was committed to improving after losing contact and having strained relationships with his children from his previous marriage. For Margo, her daughters and the expectations she feels around motherhood, were key to her ability to stay sober and transcend the obstacles that stigma and discrimination placed in her path during reintegration. Similarly, Angel's identity as a queer Latinx highly impacted her experiences during reintegration. On the one hand, her presentation and identity made her a target for surveillance and violence, increasing the perceived risk of returning to prison; but, on the other hand, facilitated her connection with communities that helped her merge her multiple identities in ways that led her to develop a more affirming, empowered, and accepting self-concept. These identities, that for so long were a source of social disconnection and shame for Angel, became sources of connection, liberation, and inspiration to advocate for and

support formerly incarcerated women and gender nonconforming communities, during reintegration.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this dissertation study was to contribute to the existing literature on the psychological effects of incarceration on reintegration for self-identified Latinx individuals. Through an examination of the lived experiences and meanings that the five participants ascribed to their time confined and efforts to reintegrate, the psychological or emotional impacts of incarceration, and the perceived effects of these on their efforts to reintegrate in the context of culture, were explored. Psychological research on the experience of imprisonment is limited (De Veaux, 2013; Haney, 2001, 2012; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015), and the specific experiences of formerly incarcerated Latinxs are even less represented (Lee et al., 2016; Martin, 2008; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2012; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2009). The present study endeavored to address this dearth of literature.

This dissertation study contributes to the understanding of how formerly incarcerated Latinx individuals describe their psychological experiences of incarceration and reintegration using Smith et al.'s (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Participants described unique personal histories of incarceration, undergoing psychological transformations while incarcerated, navigating these psychological changes in the context of reintegration, and reflecting on the ways that cultural and other social identities impacted their experiences and understanding of these experiences. Contributions resulted from the interpretation of these socioemotional impacts on participants' transitions back to their communities and the role that culture or cultural values played in that journey. This chapter will contextualize the findings of this study in the context of the research questions and

literature from previous research on the psychological impact of incarceration and reintegration, ending with an exploration of study limitations, suggestions for future research, and implications for practice, policy, and training.

Overarching Psychological Impacts of Incarceration

Participants in this study endorsed significant and long-lasting psychological impacts of incarceration that are in line with extant research on this topic. Specifically, the sense of deteriorating emotional well-being participants endorsed during incarceration is well supported in psychological literature (Anderson et al., 2016; Courtney & Maschi, 2012; Haney, 2012; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015; Turney et al., 2012). For some participants, early experiences of adversity and/or trauma led to emotional and behavioral dysregulation that resulted in criminal activity and/or gang-involvement and thus were compounded by negative experiences during incarceration (physical assaults with staff and other incarcerated individuals, isolation, etc.). For others, mental health worsened as a result of their time incarcerated, exposures to traumatic events (witnessing suicides, witnessing or experiencing sexual assaults, witnessing or experiencing physical assaults, etc.), as well as a felt need to engage in violence to “survive.” Participants endorsed a sense that their incarceration was an additional trauma they had to overcome and integrate into their lives once released. This is consistent with the literature on the psychological effects of incarceration (Haney, 2002; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015), trauma exposure during imprisonment (Anderson et al., 2016; Courtney & Maschi, 2012; DeVeaux, 2013; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Wolff et al., 2007), the negative mental health outcomes of both direct and indirect victimization (Turner et al., 2006), the vulnerabilities of youth that are incarcerated (Clark, 2017; Clements-Nolle & Waddington, 2019; Dierkhising

et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2015; Jonnson et al., 2019; Valentine et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2017) and research on the psychological toll and adaptations necessary to adjust to life in penal institutions (Briere et al., 2016; Fazel et al., 2016; Haney, 2017; Wolf & Shi, 2012).

Further, participants' disclosure of needing to disconnect from their emotions and developing an increased sense of interpersonal distrust while incarcerated is consistent with literature on prisonization and institutionalization (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2002). Institutionalization, a process whereby incarcerated individuals make specific psychological adjustments to adapt to the unique norms of confinement settings (Clemmer, 1940), includes features such as emotional overregulation, an increase in interpersonal suspicion, and social withdrawal and isolation (Haney, 2002). These adaptations, while often critical to surviving the challenges of imprisonment, can have negative long-term effects on individuals' emotional well-being, relationships, and reintegration efforts. Participants in this study reported suppressing and disconnecting from their emotions to cope with the challenges of incarceration and separation from their loved ones, in addition to managing their safety from incarcerated peers that may have perceived them as weak or targets without such suppression. These entrenched ways of interacting, participants pointed out, made relationships, emotional self-awareness, expression and communication, particularly difficult during reintegration.

Research on the effects of institutionalization corroborates participants' accounts of the effects of these adaptations on their efforts and experiences during reintegration (Haney, 2012; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). Particularly, research has found that individuals who are able to psychologically and physically protect themselves while in custody by socially withdrawing, emotional distancing, and being suspicious of other people

and their intentions, often struggle with developing the meaningful relationships and social support networks needed to successfully transition and re-engage with their communities (Clone & DeHart, 2014; Grieb et al., 2014; Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). For the participants in this study, difficulty building social connections and engaging with other people proved to be a significant challenge during reintegration given their interpersonal suspicion, emotional distancing, and lack of positive social interaction while incarcerated. Participants characterized their efforts to relate to others during reintegration as frightening, intimidating, overwhelming, and long-lasting. These social challenges and isolation proved to be an especially difficult component of their reintegration as Latinx cultural values prioritized interaction and engagement with the family as key expectations for participants during re-entry. The effects of institutionalization and social challenges to their reintegration are a contribution of this study given the lack of research on these topics with a focus on Latinx individuals.

Participants' sense of socioemotional underdevelopment because of their time incarcerated is another noteworthy finding. Research on the effects of incarceration, specifically on individuals that are younger at the time of confinement, supports the negative mental health consequences (Baćak et al., 2019) and a lack of socioemotional maturation (Dimitrieva et al., 2012) resulting from incarceration. Specifically, incarceration is argued by Dimitrieva et al. (2012) to inhibit adolescents' development of psychosocial maturity by limiting interactions with prosocial peers and preventing engagement in developmentally appropriate experiences that would stimulate typical individual, relational, and social maturation. This immaturity can be linked to increased and long-term intra- and interpersonal difficulties among formerly incarcerated individuals (Baćak et al., 2019). Although this

literature is consistent with reports from participants who were incarcerated during their adolescence and endorsed a sense of socioemotional underdevelopment (Salma and Rey), there is little to no research on inhibition or regression of such development that was reported by the participants incarcerated as adults (Angel and Teodoro). More research is needed to explore and confirm the effects of incarceration on psycho-and socioemotional development, skills, and maturity in formerly incarcerated individuals.

Finally, the impact of solitary confinement on participants' mental health post-incarceration is consistent with research on the topic. Solitary confinement, also frequently referred to as administrative segregation, the SHU, or "the hole", is pervasive in modern prisons and jails (Beck, 2015; Cloud et al., 2015; Haney, 2017; 2018; Schnittker et al., 2014) and has been linked to some of the worst and most enduring psychological effects (Bulman, 2012; Cloud et al., 2015; Hagan et al., 2018; Haney, 2012; 2017; 2018; Lynch, 2012). For participants that reported enduring solitary confinement, first onset of suicidal ideation, a worsening of pre-existing suicidal thinking and self-harm behaviors, paranoia, depressive symptoms, and hopelessness were all reported as resulting from time in isolation, consistent with research on the psychological outcomes associated with prolonged isolation in solitary confinement (Bulman, 2012; Cloud et al., 2015; Hagan et al., 2018). Participants in this study identified their experience and the socioemotional consequences of their time in solitary confinement as some of the most impactful of their time imprisoned, leaving long-term impacts that influenced how they related to themselves, their surroundings, their emotions, and other people. More research is needed on the specific role of solitary confinement and its psychological effects on the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals, especially for those incarcerated and undergoing solitary confinement during adolescence (Clark, 2017;

Clements-Nolle & Waddington, 2019; Dierkhising et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2015; Jonnson et al., 2019; Valentine et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2017)) as well as possible alternatives to the use of administrative segregation, given its extensive use in American correctional institutions and the long-term psychological consequences on the incarcerated (Beck, 2015; Cloud et al., 2015; Haney, 2018).

Process of Reintegration

How participants felt the psychological consequences of incarceration impacted their reintegration experiences was a central question in this study. Findings suggest that the process of reintegration for participants was highly complex and influenced by socioemotional, cultural, and societal factors. Reintegration moves past re-entry (simply being released from confinement) and involves the re-incorporation of the previously imprisoned person into society through prosocial engagement with family, social and/or community relationships, and engagement in meaningful employment (Laub & Sampson, 2001; 2003). Participants in this study described feeling unprepared for and struggling with the demands of reintegration, such that securing basic needs, re-connecting with their families and communities, and fulfilling personal and relational expectations was overwhelming.

Reintegration was challenging for participants in several ways. For those incarcerated during their adolescence and released as adults, reintegration offered the first opportunity to live outside of a correctional institution as an adult. For these participants, being able to make their own decisions for the first time and navigate the cultural and social norms of life “on the outside” was at times difficult to manage with the emotional sequelae of their incarcerations. In addition, given that prison life is so often marked by at least the threat of

violence (Rideau and Wikberg, 1992; Wooldredge, 2020), participants shared that the transition between the harsh and threatening world of prison to their lives post-incarceration led to persistent feelings of anxiety, paranoia, and social isolation. Managing these emotional responses and feeling unprepared to make their own decisions and interact with the world on the outside made traversing the demands of transition (i.e. securing employment, fulfilling familial/social expectations, etc.) that much more difficult.

The isolated nature of incarceration and reintegration makes supportive and functional social relationships especially critical to successful transitions from custody (Clone & DeHart, 2014; Cochran, 2014; Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Participants revealed a sense of not knowing how to connect or interact with others, worrying they did not have the interpersonal skills or knowledge of norms and culture outside of prison to effectively establish and sustain social relationships, a key value for participants. Participants associated these worries to length of time incarcerated, extensive time in isolation with little to no human interaction, and/or a lack of shared experiences with those on the outside (i.e. going to high school, navigating romantic relationships, etc.). Another participant shared that needing to be suspicious and careful engaging with others for fear of being abused or exploited during incarceration, led to persistent difficulty displaying vulnerability and being truthful with others for fear of punishment or judgment during reintegration. Participants' habits of emotional distancing and concealment, interpersonal suspicion, and detachment that once kept them safe and out of trouble while incarcerated, created a sense of social isolation and disconnection during their transitions back home. This disconnect is consistent with previous research on the psychological transformations brought

on by incarceration and their effects on reintegration (DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2002; 2012; Lynch, 2012).

Strong communities of support and interpersonal skills appeared to be especially critical for the formerly incarcerated Latinxs in this study. Participants reported struggling with their mental health during reintegration because of their social challenges, a finding that is supported by research on the higher rates of negative mental and physical health outcomes in the absence of social support for formerly incarcerated individuals that identify as Hispanic and/or Latinx (Lee et al., 2016; Lopez & Pasko, 2017; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2012; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2014). Participants disclosed that the interpersonal adaptations and habits created during incarceration for survival and protection, negatively impacted their ability to relate to others during reintegration, and particularly with their families. Family relationships are an especially critical source of support for Latinx individuals (Davila et al., 2011; Finch & Vega, 2003; Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007; Shaw & Pickett, 2013), and even more so for those that are formerly incarcerated (Lee et al., 2016; Lopez & Pasko, 2017; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2012; Muñoz-Laboy et al., 2014). Participants in this study indeed identified their family as primary sources of socioemotional, financial, and material support during reintegration.

Family, however, proved to play a more complicated role for participants in this study than previous research suggested. Some participants credited family with providing the material and social support that was so critical to their reintegration (i.e. secure and stable place to stay, food, time to get their “bearings” post-incarceration). Others attributed their determination to strengthen their relationships and make-up for lost time with family with providing them the drive to persist through the emotional, social, and stigma-related

challenges of transition. This support, however, was unfortunately also accompanied by great stress, pressure, tension, and even misunderstanding from family.

Participants conceptualized the more challenging experiences with family as linked to a lack of awareness of the socioemotional consequences of incarceration on the incarcerated individual, the complex challenges to reintegration, and cultural expectations around gender and family honor. Specifically, participants shared that this lack of awareness, coupled with a sense that participants' incarceration was a source of shame or dishonor on the family, created misunderstandings and tension around participants' efforts to cope with feelings of overwhelm and anxiety. Participants reported family would misinterpret their efforts to manage difficult emotions (i.e. disengaging from family for more time alone, not responding to triggering situations or questions) as signs of disrespect, disconnection, or contempt for the family given cultural expectations and norms around family involvement and respect. Such misconceptions and unresolved feelings strained participants' relationships with their families, creating conflict, increasing reintegration stressors, and strengthening feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Family members' lack of awareness of the psychological and material impacts of incarceration and reintegration also led to complex interactions between participants' and their family's expectations for re-entry. Participants disclosed feeling pressure from family to find work and resume family obligations as soon as possible after returning home. These expectations were closely associated to participants' roles in the family and cultural expectations around what it meant to be a "good" man, woman, father, or mother; expectations that were further strengthened and validated by participants' internalized self-concept along the same cultural value lines. The confluence of internalized and family

pressure to resume family obligations as soon as possible upon returning home, resulted in feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, and shame regarding the speed and success of participants' reintegration. Teodoro, for example, remarked that this internalized pressure to provide and take care of his family as a "Hispanic man," was one of the reasons he struggled with re-offending and recidivating for so much of his life. More research on the specific role that cultural values and expectations may have on formerly incarcerated Latinxs' reintegration experiences and challenges would be helpful to better appreciate the nuances of reintegration for this community.

Relatedly, navigating the stigma of having a criminal record was a core reintegration experience for participants. Stigma is a well-documented source of sociocultural isolation and limited access to social resources (Haney, 2002; 2012; 2017; Liem & Kunst, 2013; Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). For participants in this study, stigma was associated to limited employment opportunities, discomfort seeking and difficulty attaining public support resources (subsidized housing, financial aid for higher education, etc.), estranged relationships with family and friends, and an unstable or negative self-concept. The inherent challenges of navigating real or anticipated stigma further isolated participants, as they attempted to negotiate their needs for employment, housing, and social connection, with the felt necessity to conceal their status to avoid the negative consequences of that stigma (Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). This quandary was also recounted as leading to or strengthening participants' unstable and/or negative views of themselves.

Participants reported that dismantling internalized messages about their prospects and their identities during incarceration and reintegration was critical to their ability to persist through the challenges of re-entry. Participants shared internalizing views of themselves as

predatory, manipulative, deceitful, and criminals, to survive or make sense of their incarceration. During reintegration, a more prosocial, positive, growth-oriented sense of self needed to be incorporated in order to engage in the activities and behaviors required to effectively transition. Participants disclosed struggling with developing more positive identities while dealing with the negative characterizations, rejections, and ostracism that their status as formerly incarcerated Latinx instigated. For some participants, the stigma of being formerly incarcerated followed them even into their families, as they struggled to prove themselves as “changed” and re-join their families. Extant research supports that incarceration, and its subsequent stigmas, can trigger personal devaluation and decreased self-esteem and is likely to have long-term effects on reintegration efforts (Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015). The supplementary impact of stigma on self-concept and identity for formerly incarcerated Latinxs, as well as the role of stigma in more intimate units, such as family, suggests an area of further study.

For participants that discussed facing these dilemmas and emotional quandaries, repeated stigma-related experiences and rejections, in addition to unstable and negative self-concepts, amplified feelings of stress and created a sense of powerlessness to control or change their circumstances. This is similar to the concept of learned helplessness (Peterson et al., 1993), the development of which has been associated with incarceration (Schill & Marcus, 1998), but has not been as explicitly connected yet to stigma-related experiences and rejections. Participants that identified stigma as a particularly challenging component of their reintegration shared that real or anticipated stigma led to a sense of hopelessness and futility to “doing good” in the face of what felt like incessant marginalization and rejection for both their cultural identities and their formerly incarcerated status. More research is needed in this

area to disentangle the complicated role of stigma on the possible development of learned helplessness in formerly incarcerated people of color. Additionally, the potential link between the development of learned helplessness and its effects on self-concepts that are not conducive to change would be another fruitful area of study to better understand and support successful reintegration.

Support Services. Another important subset of findings from this study regarding participants' experiences of reintegration was the complicated role of support services. The phrase "support services", as mentioned in the previous chapter, is broadly used to include the array of institutions that interact with and offer support to currently and formerly incarcerated individuals. This includes institutions of confinement, re-entry facilitation resources, correctional supervision, mental health services, and community support organizations (i.e. churches, community colleges).

While incarcerated, participants disclosed interactions with a variety of service providers, including mental health professionals, educators, volunteers, prison staff, and the correctional institution itself. Principally, participants endorsed a lack of consistent and helpful programming and support services while incarcerated. Disparities in program and support service offerings depended on the institutions participants resided in (i.e. prisons vs. jails, low security vs. medium security vs. maximum security), as well as a lack of resources or materials (i.e. lack of books) and/or presence of incompetent instructors or facilitators, that made meaningful engagement in the programming or services that were offered difficult, impractical, or unconstructive. This lack of effectual programming, participants suggested, impacted not only the psychological experience of their incarceration (i.e. decreasing

engagement in prosocial activities) but also their reintegration as they felt unprepared to navigate the emotional, financial, and logistical challenges of re-entry.

Research on institutional programming is mixed on its effect on recidivism and effective reintegration (Lee, 2019; Visser et al. 2017). Some evidence suggests that in-prison programming can meaningfully improve formerly incarcerated outcomes upon release (Aos et al., 2006; Wilson & Davis, 2006). Given that participation in most programming in correctional institutions is voluntary, it is difficult to disentangle the extent to which fundamental differences between individuals that choose to participate or not, or differences in the programming itself, are the real cause of differential recidivism and reintegration outcomes in programming attendees (Lee, 2019). For the participants in this study, the lack and quality of the programming offered in their respective institutions was important in how they made sense of and understood their incarceration and reintegration, especially in relation to the unique challenges they would face in attempting to re-enter not just to society but to their families and communities as Latinxs in particular. More research is needed to determine how much institutional programming affects how prepared and ready formerly incarcerated individuals feel to face re-entry, how much context and culture is incorporated into these offerings, and whether this in turn helps or hinders individuals' reintegration success.

Experiences with mental health providers, both inside and outside of correctional institutions, was another pertinent finding of this study, given its relevance to mental health providers and their educators. Correctional and detention institutions are legally mandated to provide inmates with healthcare, including mental and psychiatric care (Begun et al., 2015; Haney, 2017; Reingle-Gonzalez & Connell, 2014). For the one participant that endorsed engaging in mental health services while incarcerated (Salma), services consisted primarily

of crisis and medication management, although periodic engagement in individual therapy and psychiatric inpatient care was also identified. Salma characterized her interactions with mental health professionals while incarcerated as inconsistent, unreliable, and often “not worth” the effort of engagement. This, in turn, impacted the services and resources she was willing to engage in once released.

Once back home, participants experienced interactions with therapists and mental health providers where they felt unwelcome, stigmatized, and surveilled because of their status as formerly incarcerated. These difficult exchanges were further complicated by some participants’ cultural discomfort or inexperience with mental health, as well as a feeling of distrust given mental health providers’ collaboration with their correctional institutions, parole/probation officers, and/or other re-entry agents (i.e. halfway houses). The role of stigma and multiple relationships in therapeutic relationships is well-documented as negatively impacting therapeutic alliance, treatment adherence, and treatment outcomes (Charles, 2013; Hoff & Sprout, 2009; Jahnke, 2018; Porr et al., 2012). Research on the complex positionality of mental health providers in correctional institutions and within the criminal system is limited, with most works outlining the limited opportunities for specialized training and complexities inherent in working within correctional facilities (Mills & Kendall, 2016; Reed, 2003).

Given the reported psychological impacts of incarceration for the participants in this study, mental health providers can play an important role in the mitigation of such impacts during incarceration and reintegration. In the first year following release, formerly incarcerated people are at greater risk of suicide (Pratt et al., 2010), substance use relapse, death, and re-arrest (Moore et al., 2018). Receiving mental healthcare during reentry has

been associated with lower recidivism rates (Begun et al., 2015; Petersilia, 2003) and better psychosocial outcomes (Petersilia, 2003). Given the high prevalence rates of mental health and substance use disorders in individuals housed in correctional institutions (Begun et al., 2015; Haugebrook et al., 2010; Torrey et al., 2014), and the socioemotional challenges of re-entry and reintegration found in this study, it is important to ensure quality and continuous mental healthcare is provided during confinement and post-release (Begun et al., 2015; Morris & West, 2020). More research to better understand how mental health providers can improve their support and treatment of culturally-diverse formerly incarcerated individuals, as well as how to better train and increase the cultural sensitivity of future mental health providers to work with this population, is needed.

It is important to note that not all participants endorsed difficult and unhelpful experiences with support services. Participants that experienced more culturally-sensitive, wrap-around support during re-entry shared feeling more prepared to approach their reintegration. Particularly, services that offered practical help and skills (i.e. career services, financial education and support, professional skill training, etc.), counseling (i.e. individual and family therapy), and embraced culturally-congruent values (i.e. Catholic focus on forgiveness and redemption, notion of inherent worth and value, network of positive formerly incarcerated role models of various backgrounds, inclusion of family) were identified as especially helpful in participants' reintegration. This finding is consistent with research on the importance of the inclusion of culture, context, social, and practical skill development in re-entry and reintegration services for formerly incarcerated communities (Ndrecka et al., 2017).

Similarly, community colleges were recognized as particularly valuable supports for reintegration. Participants recognized community colleges as effective in connecting them to affirming communities of support, resources, and information that facilitated reintegration. Community colleges can be key players in supporting formerly incarcerated communities and reducing recidivism rates, as they offer opportunities to increase social and economic mobility through academic and professional skills training (Strayhorn et al., 2013) that lessen the social and economic allure of crime and, therefore, decrease recidivism (Blomberg Bales et al., 2011; Lockwood et al., 2012). Community colleges are also convenient for formerly incarcerated individuals given their greater financial, geographic, and academic accessibility (LeBel et al., 2017). For participants in this study, access to community colleges afforded connections to networks of positive and culturally-diverse formerly incarcerated role models and supports, helped participants gain better understandings of the historical, social, and psychological factors that shaped their lives and experiences, helped them develop more affirming and empowering relationships to their cultural identities, and provided relational and professional skills that eased the social and employment-related challenges of reintegration. Research that informs and funding that supports how community colleges can better serve formerly incarcerated individuals and communities may be a valuable path to ensuring more successful and sustained reintegration for Latinx community members.

Role of Cultural and Social Identities

A central objective of the present study was to better understand the specific experiences of formerly incarcerated individuals that identify as Latinx, given their overrepresentation amongst the incarcerated population of the U.S. (Nellis, 2016; Lopez & Light, 2009) and their underrepresentation in the literature on reintegration. An effort to

better understand what roles, if any, culture and other salient social identities played in participants' experiences of incarceration and reintegration were key in this study. For the formerly incarcerated Latinx individuals that were interviewed, gender, parenthood status, sexual orientation, and culture were all identities that impacted the psychological experiences of incarceration and reintegration.

Gender. Cultural norms around gender were especially salient for participants in this study. Specifically, participants that identified as men cited pressures associated with providing for their families, children, and parents that shaped the way they approached and navigated their reintegration. For both these participants, manhood was culturally constructed as involving financially contributing to and providing for their families, in line with research on the cultural values around manhood in Latinx communities (Mirandé, 2017). This concept of manhood in turn increased the sense of pressure participants were already feeling from their family to find work and quickly contribute financially after release. These pressures, and their emotional consequences, participants shared, were also present during incarceration, as they navigated feelings of guilt and incompetence regarding their ability to serve in their culturally ascribed role as providers and protectors.

Parenthood. Relatedly, for participants with children, gender pressures were linked to parenthood and were essential pieces of the emotional challenges of incarceration as well as their commitments to successful reintegration. The confluence of gender and parenthood status was influenced by cultural values and norms around motherhood and fatherhood. For Margo, for example, motherhood was strongly associated with emotional and physical presence, in addition to financial provision, while for Teodoro, the guilt and pressure he felt

while being incarcerated and later during reintegration, was centralized on his inability to provide financially for his children and partners.

This guilt and sense of not living up to cultural and familial expectations contributed to the emotional challenges (i.e. shame, depression, etc.) they faced during their time confined. Participants endorsed strained and estranged relationships with their children during incarceration. Later, while back in their communities and families, pressure to make up for lost time and improve their relationships with their children, increased social and employment-related anxiety. Interestingly, this pressure, although significant and challenging, was also recognized by participants as positive in that it provided them with the drive and resolve to persist through the challenges faced during re-entry. Parenthood, therefore, proved to be an important identity that impacted the psychological impacts of incarceration and participants' journeys through reintegration. These findings are in line with cultural expectations and values in Latinx communities around gender roles (Miville et al., 2017; Nuñez et al., 2016) and parenthood (Acevedo, 2017; Oliveira, 2017), and suggest an important area of further study and consideration for researchers, clinicians, and anti-recidivism advocates with the goal of supporting successful reintegration in these communities.

Gender and Sexual Minority Identity. For the one participant that identified as non-binary, gender identity and sexual orientation were central to her incarceration and reintegration. Specifically, Angel's experience of incarceration was marked by first-onset suicidal ideation, a lack of financial and emotional support from her family, substantial interpersonal suspicion that led to social isolation, and sexual assault at the hands of a prison guard. Research shows that sexual and gender minorities who are incarcerated are at greater

risk for sexual and physical victimization from both other prisoners and prison staff (Brown & Herman, 2015; Meyer et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2020), stricter punishment from prison staff (Brown & Jenness, 2020; Meyer et al., 2017), solitary confinement (Brown & Jenness, 2020; Lydon et al., 2015), suicidality and self-harm (Tadros et al., 2020), are less likely to have financial or emotional support from their families during and after incarceration (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018), and are disproportionately targeted by police once back home (Braunstein, 2017).

While reintegrating, Angel struggled with feeling safe in a mixed-gender halfway house where sexual harassment and inappropriate relationships between staff and residents was rampant, triggering her sexual traumas and motivating her to leave the halfway house as soon as possible. Her family's culturally conservative values around gender and sexual orientation made returning home impossible, and she faced homelessness for months after leaving the halfway house.

While other participants discussed challenges with family around cultural expectations and a lack of awareness of the impacts of incarceration during reintegration, Angel's relationship with her family was further complicated by a lack of acceptance towards her non-binary and queer identities in addition to having been incarcerated. Angel disclosed misconceptions from her family that ascribed her incarceration to her sexual orientation and gender identity, multiplying the stigmas she faced from family and further isolating her during and after incarceration. Although Angel shares that with time, she was able to develop a stronger and more affirming relationship with her family with regard to her identities, she disclosed continuing to struggle with the unique psychological and societal hurdles brought on by her intersecting identities as a queer, non-binary, formerly incarcerated person of color.

These identities also impacted Angel's exposure to resources and post-incarceration trajectory. Moving to a city with strong and affirming queer communities of color was especially helpful for Angel to develop a sense of community and self-acceptance regarding her identities. Further, being connected to positive role models in the formerly incarcerated and queer communities of color through her community college, was exceptionally valuable for Angel given the alienation she felt along multiple points of her identity upon re-entry. There is a significant lack of research on the reintegration experiences of formerly incarcerated queer people of color (Maschi et al., 2016). Although this study only includes the experience of one individual, it highlights the unique and manifold impacts and challenges that such intersecting identities confer on the formerly incarcerated experience. More research is sorely needed to gain a better understanding of the experiences, challenges, strengths, and best practices for supporting the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals with multiple marginalized identities. Further, more research on how to support and provide affirming psychoeducation for families of formerly incarcerated queer and gender non-conforming Latinxs is necessary to strengthen and facilitate culturally-congruent sources of support and cohesion for multiply marginalized individuals.

Culture. Cultural identity, and culture itself, played different roles for different participants. Participants disclosed complicated relationships with their cultural identity prior to incarceration, during incarceration, and while reintegrating. Prior to incarceration, participants highlighted conflicted feelings of pride, isolation, confusion, and shame associated with their cultural identity. Participants divulged simultaneously associating their cultural identities with positive attributes such as being hard-working, family-oriented, persistent, and strong, as well as with negative attributes such as being difficult, unwelcome,

lesser, and even criminal. One participant, Rey, attributed part of the allure of the gang culture as related to his feelings of cultural isolation and confusion (i.e. not being seen as Mexican or American enough). The gang culture, for Rey, offered an identity complete with the cultural pride, community, and belonging he felt he lacked as a third generation Mexican-American youth. For other participants, their cultural identity and the conflicted feelings they had about being Latinx only furthered the identity confusion and social isolation they experienced during incarceration and reintegration.

Given the ethno-racial climates of correctional institutions in the U.S. (Jacobs, 1979; Richmond & Johnson, 2009), participants faced specific challenges during incarceration because of their perceived and actual cultural identities. Participants reported being required to identify with sub-groups within the Latinx communities in their respective institutions (i.e. *Norteños*, *Sureños*, *paisas*, etc.) and having to engage in violence or other activities in order to protect themselves from, or be protected by, these sub-groups. For participants that grew up “in the system,” these interactions and the cultural values and norms these sub-groups abided by, impacted the way they learned to relate to their cultures. Later, while reintegrating, participants faced the task of disentangling this understanding of cultural identity from the values and norms they had come to associate with their culture within the penal system, especially since many of the values (i.e. violence in order to ensure respect and uphold honor) were in conflict with those required for desistance from crime and successful reintegration. This process of disentanglement, according to participants, was facilitated by their engagement in higher education at their local community colleges, restoration of positive relationships with their families of origin, and exposure to constructive formerly incarcerated Latinx role models.

The process of reintegration then, for many participants, offered opportunities to develop and build a relationship with their cultural identity that was more inclusive, affirming, and in line with their commitment to reintegration. Participants described developing an understanding of their cultural identities that allowed them to better understand their life and experience of incarceration as a result of societal, and not just individual, factors. Developing a more critical, historically-informed understanding of their cultural identity through education, was key to feeling more socially connected and comfortable with their identities as formerly incarcerated. Given the paucity of research on the specific experiences of racial and/or ethnic minorities in the correctional system and their impacts on reintegration (Cooke, 2005; Ka’Opua et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2016) the challenges, expectations, and changing relationships to cultural identity expressed by the formerly incarcerated Latinx participants in this study is a particularly relevant contribution.

It is important to note that one participant, Salma, did not endorse feeling that her cultural identity impacted her experiences in any significant ways. Salma shared feeling that her experiences with mental health and her age more directly impacted her than her cultural identity. When asked what being Latina meant to her, Salma identified practices such as listening to music in Spanish, eating Mexican foods, and speaking Spanish with her family. Salma’s conceptualization of the role of cultural identity in her experiences may indicate that for some formerly incarcerated individuals, other, more salient identities or experiences, may be more significant factors in their conceptualization of their incarceration and reintegration. Alternatively, differences in how individuals may relate to their cultural identities, or even the role of being in different stages of cultural or racial identity development, may explain this experience. Attention to culture and the diverse roles that cultural identity may, or may

not, play in peoples' lives, is key in understanding the unique and shared experiences of formerly incarcerated people.

Limitations

The limitations of this study emphasize the need for more research on formerly incarcerated individuals in the psychological literature. Although the results of a qualitative study are meant to offer in-depth understanding of an experience or phenomenon and are never meant to be generalizable or representative of that experience or phenomena (Ayres et al., 2003), it is important to note that particular identities, characteristics, or factors will lead to very different experiences of a phenomenon. While the purpose of this study was to explore the ways that some formerly incarcerated Latinxs describe the psychological impact of incarceration and its effects on their reintegration, it should be noted that participants were self-selected and needed to have endorsed being back in their community for at least 12 months. Thus, participants who may be more reluctant to disclose the psychological impacts of their incarceration, those who were earlier in their reintegration journeys, or individuals that may have recidivated before 12 months, may have offered differing insight into the experiences and challenges of incarceration and reintegration. It is important to continue to explore the experiences of formerly incarcerated Latinxs who may be currently struggling with the emotional and psychological consequences of their confinement, as well as those who may have succumbed to these struggles, so as to better understand the particularities of these challenges in real time.

The fact that interviews were conducted using an online platform and during the COVID-19 pandemic suggest further limitations. While participants did not disclose any direct issues or concerns with the online platform, and two explicitly cited greater comfort

with disclosing emotionally intense and vulnerable information online over in-person interviews given their discomfort in social interactions, the depth of information shared, the willingness of participants to broach certain topics, and/or the comfort levels of participants with online communication methods, may have impacted the present study's findings. Qualitative research methodologists outline in-person interviews as the best practice standard over web-based data collection methods (Lo Iacono et al., 2016; Sullivan, 2012), in particular because of the ability to include nonverbal observations and build rapport more readily with participants. Factors outside of the researcher's control, then, such as limited nonverbal communication from participants as a result of inconsistent or delayed connectivity issues and sound or video quality of recorded interviews, may have also impacted the data collected and analyzed in this study.

Future Directions

This study's findings and extant research suggest incarceration and reintegration experiences may be greatly differentiated by culture, gender identity, and sexual orientation (Abderhalden, 2020; Cooke, 2005; Ka'Opua et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2016; Maschi et al., 2016). Although the use of Smith et al.'s (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) allowed for in-depth presentation and analysis of how gender identity and sexual orientation impacted participants' understandings and experiences of incarceration and reintegration, future studies could continue utilizing this method to further extricate the role that gender identity and sexual orientation may have on the psychological experience of incarceration and its effect on reintegration. Such an in-depth approach could offer more insight on the diversity of impacts that gender and sexual identities have on the psychological

impact of incarceration and reintegration, given the overrepresentation of gender and sexual minorities in the carceral system (Braunstein, 2017; Meyer et al., 2017).

Another important future direction lies in exploring the potential impacts of incarceration and the reintegration experiences in relation to phenotypic, national origin, and racial diversity within Latin communities. While all participants self-identified as Latinx, Hispanic or Chicanx, none identified as Afro-Latinx, and all could trace their family's heritage to Mexico. Afro-Latinxs are even more criminalized and targeted by police than non-Black Latinxs (Márquez, 2019), and may therefore have very different experiences leading up to, during, and after incarceration. Relatedly, formerly incarcerated Latinxs that can trace their or their family's heritage to countries other than Mexico may experience incarceration and reintegration, and their psychological consequences, differently given different cultural norms, expectations, or values. More research, especially in-depth qualitative research, is needed on the experiences of formerly incarcerated Latinxs from a variety of backgrounds to better understand incarceration and reintegration in this diverse community.

Further, the literature on the psychological consequences of imprisonment could also be greatly expanded by more pointed explorations of the nuances introduced by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals' cultural identities, at different stages of development, as well as best practices for treating and supporting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds upon re-entry. The psychological challenges of imprisonment are numerous, and the consequences for many participants in this study were long-lasting, far-reaching, and involved negotiating multiple marginalized identities and stigmas with the trials of everyday life. The need for culturally-sensitive, population-specific support from mental health

professionals is obvious. More research on how to better train mental healthcare providers to work with formerly incarcerated individuals and their families is essential so that formerly incarcerated individuals can receive the care they need to heal from the traumas and psychosocial consequences of confinement.

Further research on the role of ethnic, racial, and cultural identities is warranted. Participants in this study identified cultural and ethnic factors that impacted their experiences while incarcerated as well as during reintegration. The way participants discussed and understood the role of cultural and ethnic factors in their experiences was likely influenced by individual stages of cultural and ethnic identity development. A potential avenue for future research in this topic could include alternative and creative modes of discussing, analyzing, and exploring cultural and ethnic identity (i.e. visual or artistic representations of cultural and/or social identity development, inclusion of racial and ethnic identity development assessment tools, etc.) that may be more accessible to participants, could provide additional methods of understanding and communicating what cultural and ethnic identity means for participants, and offer greater insight into the ways that individuals in different communities, from different backgrounds, or who are at different stages in their identity development, understand their cultural, ethnic, or social identities.

The specific role of family and culture on the incarceration and reintegration experiences of Latinx individuals is another critical area for further study. Although there are re-entry programs and resources for formerly incarcerated individuals that already include families in re-entry and reintegration support (i.e. *Family ReEntry*; *Anti-Recidivism Coalition*; *OAR*; Mooney & Bala, 2018; Ndrecka et al., 2017), it is important that future research explores what types of family-embedded support are most helpful, how to address

stigma within families, and how to best navigate the cultural pressures and challenges that so often arise for families when formerly incarcerated individuals come home.

The complicated and extensive role of stigma in the lives of formerly incarcerated people is a critical topic for continued investigation. Specifically, stigma's effects on identity formation, or reconstruction, in formerly incarcerated people, and in particular formerly incarcerated people of color, is essential to encouraging the development of self-concepts and commitment to prosociality that is so necessary for successful reintegration. Persistently facing stigma created feelings of hopelessness and at times discouraged participants from seeing the value of change and positive reintegration. Research on how stigma and stigma-related experiences may impact the identities, behaviors, and feelings of learned helplessness in formerly incarcerated individuals is essential to continue to explore.

Thorough investigations of effective and ineffective correctional and reintegration support resources are important avenues for future research. Particularly, exploring the effectiveness and utility of institutional programming, from the perspectives of imprisoned and recently released attendees, is a potential approach to addressing the challenges of re-entry and lessening recidivism. Exploring what community colleges are doing well, for instance, could help not only improve the work that community colleges are already doing with formerly incarcerated communities, but also inform the way institutional programming is designed, implemented, and assessed.

Finally, future uses of the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach with this community could benefit from a multiple interview data collection approach instead of the single interview approach utilized in this study. Multiple interviews could provide an opportunity to gain even more depth and nuanced understanding of participants experiences,

as well as allow for participants to process and continually explore their experiences in the context of the research questions. This approach could offer future research an even deeper understanding of individual case experiences and potentially extricate even greater nuance in the experience of incarceration for formerly incarcerated Latinxs.

Implications

This study has implications for how researchers, mental health practitioners, anti-recidivism advocates, and policy makers approach the important work of creating more facilitative environments for formerly incarcerated Latinxs' reintegration efforts. Specifically, understanding the roles of the psychological effects of incarceration, internalized and lived stigma, social and cultural isolation, and the scarcity of adequate support, awareness, and resources on the outcomes of individuals released from prisons and jails is critical to developing approaches and programs that adequately support them. It is crucial to continue to explore how both pre-existing and incarceration-related trauma, community violence, and structural barriers limit people from living healthy and fulfilling lives. Importantly, researchers and policy makers must take on the task of regularly interrogating how current institutional and social structures facilitate, or not, the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals in ways that are conducive to healing and prosociality (Schnittker, 2014; Schnittker & Massoglia, 2015).

Researchers, policy makers, and advocates, should continue to explore the complex ways that cultural and social marginalization impact formerly incarcerated people's mental health and reintegration, and how these multiply and intersect for formerly incarcerated people from marginalized communities (i.e. communities of color, sexual and gender minorities, etc.). Although the formerly incarcerated experience is marked by stigma and a

lack of professional opportunities for people of all backgrounds, the ways that multiple stigmas or marginalizations can impact formerly incarcerated people from minoritized communities is key to consider when creating programs and policies meant to support these individuals.

In working with formerly incarcerated individuals, clinicians need to be aware of how the stigma of a criminal record impacts the individual, members of their family, as well as the therapeutic relationship. Given that formerly incarcerated individuals are too often left solely responsible for making smooth transitions to society after release with little to no support other than parole or probationary supervision (Lynch, 2012), it is essential that community mental health practitioners continue to advocate for better, more culturally-responsive, and affirming social and mental health services for this population (Liem & Kunst, 2013; Lynch, 2012). Clinicians should also strive to interrogate their conceptions and assumptions about people with criminal records, and especially people with criminal records from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds, as they should with any community of which they are not a part of who they are working with (Mazzula & LiVecchi, 2017), to improve their treatment and work with this frequently disadvantaged, stigmatized, and underserved group. Further, when working with families with incarcerated members or with formerly incarcerated members, clinicians should consider how to mend often ruptured family relationships, and work to decrease potential stigma in families by providing psychoeducation around the psychological and social antecedents, impacts, and consequences of incarceration. Supporting families, as well as formerly incarcerated individuals themselves, is critical to successful reintegration.

The overwhelming numbers of people that have in some way been impacted by the criminal justice system in this country, whether directly as formerly incarcerated individuals,

or indirectly as with the families and friends of people who are or have been incarcerated, highlights the importance of better understanding how to support and successfully reintegrate individuals who have had run-ins with the system for the health and wellness of our communities and society at large. Particularly, successful reintegration ensures the economic, political, and civil engagement of a significant segment of our communities, which will undoubtedly ensure the future safety, well-being, and health of all members of our communities. Mental healthcare providers, researchers, and community members committed to social justice and public health, should strive to better understand and improve the ways that we support individuals who are returning home in order to decrease recidivism, increase the number of prosocial agents in our communities, and ensure that we support equitable access to health, well-being, and community engagement.

Conclusion

Given increasingly competitive and exclusionary labor markets and a political climate characterized by increased hostility towards Latinx and immigrant communities, it is important that we continue to explore the experiences and needs of the communities that are most marginalized in our society to ensure greater access to equitable economic and social opportunities, as well as positive physical and mental health outcomes. Latinx individuals are at greater risk for imprisonment given social and political marginalization (Isom Scott, 2017; Márquez, 2019), high rates of poverty (Gradín, 2012), the hyper-criminalization of communities of color (Alexander, 2012; Isom Scott, 2017; Rios, 2011; Márquez, 2019), and are in fact overrepresented in correctional institutions (Lopez & Light, 2009; Nellis, 2016). The present study contributes to the existing literature on the psychological effects of incarceration on reintegration for Latinxs through the in-depth examination of the lived

experiences and meanings that 5 formerly incarcerated Latinxs attributed to incarceration, the psychological impacts of that incarceration, and the observed effects of these on their efforts to reintegrate.

This study identified the complicated and far-reaching psychological transformations Latinx participants attributed as resulting from their time imprisoned, the effect of these socioemotional consequences on their reintegration, and the various ways that culture and identity impacted both. Given that the Latinx population reached almost 61 million in 2019 (Pew Research Center, 2020), is projected to be over 111 million by 2060 (U.S. Census, 2018), and the rates of incarceration are so high in Latinx communities (Couloute, 2018), understanding the challenges and needs of this population is critical to the health and well-being of our society. Findings from the present study highlight the value of in-depth qualitative exploration to better understand and capture the nuances and complexity of lived experience, particularly for minoritized and marginalized communities. It is essential that we continue to explore the individual, familial, and societal impacts of incarceration, so that we may better develop and practice approaches that support formerly incarcerated individuals and the communities they return to. The tremendous numbers of incarcerated people in this country almost guarantee that someone in our own communities and lives has been impacted by incarceration; attention to formerly incarcerated individuals, and the diversity of experiences within this group, is essential for the current and future health and well-being of all our communities.

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Appendix A
Screening Instrument

Gender:

- ☐ Woman/Female
- ☐ non-binary/gender non-conforming
- ☐ Man/Male
- ☐ Identity not listed, please provide your self-identification: _____

Current Age: _____

Are you currently on parole/probation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you identify as Latina/o/x, Hispanic, or Chicana/o/x?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you been incarcerated in the last 5 years for a continuous period of one year or more?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you been hospitalized at any time since your release?

- ☐ Yes, If so, when? _____
- ☐ No

Are you on any psychiatric medication?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Date of release from period of incarceration: _____

Appendix B
Demographic Questionnaire

Date of Interview: _____

Gender:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Woman/Female
☐ non-binary/gender non-conforming
☐ Man/Male | ☐ Identity not listed, please provide your self-identification:
_____ |
|---|---|

Current Age: _____

Age at First Arrest: _____

Age at First Incarceration: _____

Length of First Incarceration: _____

Longest Period of Incarceration: _____

Age Range of Longest Period of Incarceration: _____

How many times have you been incarcerated? _____

What type(s) of crime was this incarceration for (you will not be asked to share details of crime):

- ☐ “violent”
- ☐ “nonviolent”
- ☐ drug related offense

Are you a parent?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

How do you identify racially? _____

How would you describe yourself? (Mark all that apply).

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Guatemalan
☐ Mexican
☐ Costa Rican
☐ Salvadoran
☐ Cuban
☐ Puerto Rican
☐ Honduran
☐ Dominican | ☐ Colombian
☐ Multiple Ethnicities
(Please specify):

☐ Identity not listed, please provide your self-identification:
_____ |
|--|--|

What is your generational status in the United States?

- ☐ 1st generation (you were not born in the United States)
- ☐ 2nd generation (you were born in the United States, but parents born in another country)
- ☐ 3rd generation (you and your parents were born in the United States, but both grandparents were born in another country)

- ☐ 4th generation (you and your parents were born in the United States, one of your grandparents were born in another country)
- ☐ 5th generation (you, your parents, and your grandparents were born in the United States)

Appendix C
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction of Study Script: I am interested in learning about the emotional consequences of incarceration from people who identify as formerly incarcerated and Latinxs/Hispanics/Chicanxs. I will ask you some questions about your experience of incarceration and the emotional consequences of your return to your community. I am particularly interested in learning about ways that your culture may have affected this process. Like we reviewed during the consent process, you may skip any question or request to end the interview at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. What was your experience of incarceration like?
 - a. How do you think your incarceration affected you emotionally/psychologically?
2. How do you think these things affected your return to your community?
3. How do you think the transition from prison/transitioning to your community affected you emotionally?
 - a. What helped you get through these experiences?
 - b. What was unhelpful in getting through these differences?
4. What does being Latinx/Hispanic/Chicanx mean to you?
5. How do you think your being Latinx/Hispanic/Chicanx might have affected your experience?
 - a. How has being Latinx/Hispanic/Chicanx impacted your ability to reintegrate?
 - b. What do you think are better ways to support FI Latinx/Hispanic/Chicanx during reintegration?
6. Is there anything that I did not ask, that you would like to add?
7. Would it be okay for me to reach out to you if I have additional questions or need anything clarified?

Appendix D

Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study **University of California Santa Barbara**

Title of the Study: Formerly Incarcerated Latinxs' Perspectives on the Psychological Impact of Incarceration

Lead Investigator's Information:

María D. Vázquez, Graduate Student
Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education
University of California, Santa Barbara
Phone: 857-312-4777
Email: mvazquez@ucsb.edu

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of formerly incarcerated Latina/o/x during and after incarceration.

Procedures

If you decide to participate, you will have the opportunity to participate in interviews about your experiences during and after incarceration with the researcher. The interviews will take approximately 60-90 minutes (1-1.5 hours) and will be audio recorded with your permission. The recordings will be used to transcribe the data and neither your name, nor any information that may be used to identify you, will be used on the transcript. All data will be destroyed once the project is completed. Please be aware that you do not have to participate in this research and you may stop your participation at any time without penalty. You may also skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable, or would not like, to answer.

Risks

The possible risks associated with participating in this study are minimal. They include possibly remembering some difficult life experiences and feeling some emotional discomfort if you choose to discuss personal or emotionally-laden topics with the interviewer. You have the right to disclose topics, and/or choose not to talk about specific topics, at your discretion. If you experience any uncomfortable feelings, or feel that you may need more support after the interview, the researcher can provide you with a list of local and accessible resources.

Should you feel any discomfort or distress after the interview, you may contact the Crisis Intervention and Counseling Neline at 1-800-999-9999.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you because of your participation in this study. Some potential benefits associated with the study include reflecting on your experience of incarceration,

reintegration, and how this has affected your well-being, relationships, identity, and life. This reflection may help you gain more knowledge about yourself and contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of formerly incarcerated Latina/o/x individuals.

Confidentiality

Your responses will be kept confidential. The information you provide will be presented as de-identified group data and steps will be taken so that what you share is not traceable to you as an individual. Audio-taped recordings will be used only to help researchers remember and transcribe your responses, and will be destroyed upon completion of the project. The transcript will have no identifying information. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as research data is not protected from legal subpoena.

Incentives

You will receive a \$40 Amazon gift card after the interview as a to thank you for your time.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is entirely voluntary and you may change your mind about being in the study and discontinue participation at any time without any negative consequences.

Principal Investigator's Personal and Financial Interests in the Research and Study Sponsor

The investigators in this study have no financial interest in this research and will not benefit monetarily from this study.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact María D. Vázquez at 857-312-4777 or mvazquez@ucsb.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at:

(805) 893-3807; hsc@research.ucsb.edu; or write to:

University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of
Research,
Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

Consent

Participation in research is voluntary. Your signature below will indicate that you have decided to participate as a research participant in the study described above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.

Signature_____

Date_____