

1-1-2016

Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy

Christina R. Wilson

Nova Southeastern University, iheartresolution@gmail.com

This document is a product of extensive research conducted at the Nova Southeastern University [College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences](#). For more information on research and degree programs at the NSU College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, please click [here](#).

Follow this and additional works at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss_dcar_etd

 Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Share Feedback About This Item

NSUWorks Citation

Christina R. Wilson. 2016. *Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy*. Doctoral dissertation. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSUWorks, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences – Department of Conflict Resolution Studies. (49)
https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss_dcar_etd/49.

This Dissertation is brought to you by the CAHSS Theses and Dissertations at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of Conflict Resolution Studies Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution
training on inmate self-efficacy

by

Christina R. Wilson

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University
2016

Copyright © by


Christina R. Wilson
October 2016

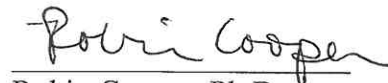
**Nova Southeastern University
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

This dissertation was submitted by Christina Wilson under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:


October 18, 2016
Date of Defense


Elena Bastidas, Ph.D.
Chair


Robin Cooper, Ph.D.
Committee Member


Neil Katz, Ph.D.
Committee Member

November 18, 2016
Date of Final Approval


Elena Bastidas, Ph.D.
Chair

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to a loving God who birthed the idea of research with inmates at the Rocky Mountain Women's Conference in Utah in September 2013. He has supported me and walked with me through each step. I am grateful for the opportunities I've been afforded and excited about my future.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my husband, Chuck, who has been a staunch supporter and my best cheerleader. On those days when I attempted to slack and pretend my dissertation wasn't waiting to be written, in an instinctual fashion, unique to him alone, he would ask me if I had anything to do. Honey, we are finally done!

To my children, Lindsay, Chase, and Corey and grandchildren who have also been supportive. Thank you for your patience and kindness and creating a space for mom's/grandma's studies. If it wasn't for Lindsay being accepted to Texas Tech's clinical psychology program, I might never have considered the possibility of pursuing a doctorate. You truly are my "Linspiration."

To my friend, Michelle Verhaal, who has been with me the whole way with words of support and encouragement. Thank you for your friendship. We managed to slip in some good times and character cake amidst this behemoth. To my coffee buddies who stand with me. Love you. To my cohort at Nova Southeastern University, what an amazing group of people. Specifically, Melnee Berry and Ann Marie Moynihan, my bunkies during residential institute. We have had the best of times. There is no greater honor for me than to receive my doctorate having journeyed beside you!

To the faculty who worked with me and supported me throughout this process, Dr. Elena Bastidas, Dr. Neil Katz, and Dr. Robin Cooper, thank you for your patience, kind words, and hard work. Dr. Bastidas, thank you for taking me on and believing in me and what I do and for formulating the dissertation as a book from the very beginning.

To Lorenn Walker who encouraged me in my work with inmates and generously provided guidance to enhance my work. To Austin Mead the program coordinator who helped coordinate all of the research in jail. I could not have done it without you. Thank you, Julia Loughney, for showing up at the perfect time to be my research assistant. You are an angel. To all the hardworking and dedicated people who work in the criminal justice system—thank you for the valuable service you provide for our communities.

Finally, to every inmate who participated in ROPES, particularly those who took the time to participate in the study. My goal was to represent you as you are. Thank you for trusting me and allowing me to be part of your journey. I have said it before and I'll say it again here, "*I believe you have taught me as much as I have taught you.*" Although I've said this before, it bears repeating, "*I BELIEVE IN YOU!*"

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Abstract	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study	1
Background and Study Overview	1
ROPES Course Overview	6
Individual ROPES Modules	10
Problem Statement	15
Purpose of the Study	16
Research Question	16
Theoretical Perspectives	18
The Nature of the Study	25
Definitions	28
Untested Assumptions	31
Scope and Delimitations	32
Limitations	33
Significance and Potential Advances in Knowledge	34
Summary	34
Chapter 2: Literature Review	36
Introduction	36
Dynamics Associated with Incarceration	37

Inmate Education	38
Literature Search Strategy	40
Theoretical Foundations	41
Key Concepts and Related Studies	54
Correctional Programming Standards.....	54
Innovative Criminological Paradigms	61
A Review of Inmate Education Focusing on Social Skills	70
Summary and Conclusions	76
Chapter 3: Research Method	78
Research Design and Rationale	78
The Role of the Researcher	81
Methodology	82
Participant Selection and Logic	82
Instrumentation	83
Instrumentation Development	85
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	86
Data Analysis	90
Issues of Trustworthiness	92
Ethical Procedures	97
The Road to Research with Inmates	97
Working Within the Jail	101
Chapter 4: Results	106

Introduction	106
Setting	106
Demographics	107
Results	107
Demographic Information	108
Interview Questions	110
Interpretation of the Findings	140
Summary	157
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	159
Introduction	159
Discussion	160
Theoretical Implications	165
Limitations of the Study	170
Recommendations	170
Implications	172
Conclusion	174
References	179
Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in the ROPES course study	193
Appendix B: Consent Form	194
Appendix C: Interview Protocol and Questionnaire	197
Appendix D: List of Tables	201
Curriculum Vitae	219

List of Tables

Table 1. Question Two	114
Table 2. Question Three	118
Table 3. Question Six	128
Table 4. Positive Criminology Themes	139
Table 5. Self-perceptions Pre- and Post-ROPES	141
Table 6. Textural and Structural Themes	151
Table 7. Affecting Hearts and Minds	156
Table 8. Demographic Information	199
Table 9. Question One	200
Table 10. Question Four	202
Table 11. Question Five	204
Table 12. Question Seven	206
Table 13. Question Eight	210
Table 14. Theoretical Implications	214

List of Figures

Figure 1. ROPES Self-Efficacy Development Model154

Abstract

American prisons are overflowing with inmates exacting an incalculable human and moral cost on inmates, their families, and society. A central theme in criminality is the inability to deal with conflict and the affiliated emotions in an appropriate manner. Further, problem-solving, communication, and consequential thinking skills are lacking in the lives of many inmates due to lack of proper role models, lack of skills, and lack of expectations. Focusing on inmate education is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention according to leading criminological theorists. This phenomenological study was an assessment of a ten-session, holistic conflict resolution course for inmates called Reach Out with Purposeful Engagement Skills. The course is centered on emotional intelligence skills including self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, and incorporates a multi-theoretical framework consisting of (a) human needs theory, (b) hope theory, (c) social construction theory, (d) appreciative inquiry, and (e) restorative justice principles. The teaching methodology was centered on positive criminology, a sub-group of positive psychology which embraces concepts such as compassion, encouragement, goodness, gratitude, positive modeling, and spirituality. An underlying belief was that recognition of individual participant strengths, if nurtured and developed, can contribute toward personal change. Results of the study describe participant's perceptions of self-efficacy in conflict resolution which resulted in personal change and empowerment. This study contributes toward qualitative literature supporting socio-emotional education for inmates delivered in a constructive environment to inspire transformation at a deep and necessary level in order to support and promote desistance.

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

“We don’t need someone to show us the ROPES. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. Deep inside us we know the feelings we need to guide us. Our task is to learn to trust our inner knowing.” Sonia Johnson (as cited by Pranis, 2010, p. 319).

Background and Study Overview

This phenomenological study examined the effects holistic conflict resolution training has on inmate conflict resolution self-efficacy. The ROPES course for inmates is a multimodal approach to conflict resolution, which emphasizes emotional intelligence, narrative, and appreciative-based curriculum. ROPES is an acronym for Reaching Out with Purposeful Engagement Skills and guides participants through the process of learning about their selves, their emotions, and their behaviors in an effort to regulate emotional reactivity to conflict. The ultimate goal of teaching ROPES to inmates is to introduce alternative ways to collaborate with others while navigating through difficult dialogues.

The holistic nature of ROPES provides the foundation for three, key emotional intelligence skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. Emotional intelligence tenets compliment holistic training, which encompasses emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual perspectives. The lessons were formulated to explore perspectives of self, including behaviors, which may have served adaptively in the past but have morphed into maladaptive behaviors creating intrusive barriers blocking problem-solving. Inability to traverse conflict and deal appropriately with adversity is a common

theme among inmates. For this reason, ROPES was uniquely designed to educate a burgeoning inmate population.

The United States inmate population is the highest in the world. Focusing on inmate education is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention, according to research (Banse, Koppee-Gossel, Kistemaker, Werber, & Schmidt, 2013; Choate & Normore, 2013; Layton-MacKenzie, 2008; Ronel & Elisha, 2011; Ubah & Robinson, 2003; Vacca, 2004). The economic cost of housing inmates affects every citizen, therefore establishing methods, which produce internal transformation should be a national priority. Few inmate courses focus solely on interpersonal communication skills in general and conflict resolution specifically. The ROPES course was created with conflict resolution as a specific outcome for a population known for their inability to resolve interpersonal issues.

Inability to deal with emotions and conflict in an appropriate manner is a central theme in criminality. Problem-solving, communication, and consequential thinking skills are lacking in the lives of many inmates. Therefore, it's my argument that teaching inmates skills, which help them deal with emotions and identify, avoid, and resolve conflict can help reduce recidivism and boost desistance and are ultimately vital for societal safety.

This chapter provides a brief description of the current inmate population and the need for innovative programming, which teaches communication and problem-solving skills. In addition, it includes summaries of penal research, this current study, and details about the ROPES course. Other concepts covered in this chapter are the problem

statement, the purpose of the study, and the interview questions. The theoretical concepts are introduced as well as the methodology used and the rationale for using it, assumptions, scope and delimitations and significance of the study.

The U.S. Inmate Population. The United States has the highest inmate population in the world. Statistics from the International Centre for Prison Studies reveal the United States leads every other nation in the world in incarceration with rates of 716 per 100,000 people (Wing, 2013). An article in Huffington Post, *Here are all of the Nations that Incarcerate Their Population More than the U.S.* (Wing, 2013), identifies *recidivism* and *desistance* as the primary concerns according to the National Institute of Justice. Recidivism refers to reoffending after release and desistance refers to the process of arriving at a permanent state of non-offending. Statistics indicate a long-lasting concern for societal safety in the wake of lacking effective deterrence processes within the system. Former Attorney General, Eric Holder, is quoted in the article, stating “We need to ensure that incarceration is used to punish, deter, and rehabilitate – not merely to convict, warehouse and forget” (Wing, 2013). Holder goes on to say the current rate of incarceration is both “ineffective and unsustainable.” According to the former attorney general the economic burden in 2010 was \$80 billion and the “human and moral costs are impossible to calculate” (Wing, 2013). In addition, if separation and isolation from general members of society is the sentence, it stands to reason that reintegration must become part of the solution. Yet, reintegration remains precarious.

Inmate Education. The history of inmate education is lugubrious and complicated. Opinions and methodologies regarding inmate education have morphed in

the wake of vacillating economic conditions and swelling inmate populations. In addition, Robert Martinson's 1974 article on "what works" in penal rehabilitation was interpreted as "nothing works" exacerbating the downward spiral toward rehabilitative efforts.

America's perception that inmates are *locked away* with little thought given to the realities of reintegration have resulted in a further decline in efforts toward rehabilitation. However, the authors of *Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America (2005)*, Jeremy Travis and Christy Visher, paint a more realistic picture. They estimate ninety-three percent of incarcerates will return home, explaining those who are "welcomed by families and aided by agencies, will make a successful transition. More often than not, however, they will be released to poor inner-city communities with few services and little public sympathy for their plight" (p. 45). In addition, "Their prison record will have created new barriers to work, housing, and social relationships. Now more embittered, alienated, and prone to violence than before, many ex-convicts return to crime" (p. 45). Many released inmates re-enter the community with little or no new training or skills to initiate change in the behaviors that led to incarceration in the first place.

Recidivism statistics indicate a need for further education and skill building. Two out of every three inmates that are released are rearrested and one out of two will return to prison within three years of being released (Wexler, Lurigio, & Rodriguez, 2011). Unless inmates experience a degree of transformation (Layton-MacKenzie, 2008) they are destined to end up back in jail. In their article *Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation (2002)*, Giordano, Cernkovich, and

Rudolph, describe an essential link between cognitive and behavioral change among offenders and designate these shifts as fundamental to the transformation process. This causal chain of events paves a path to the heart of this research project, which is to equip inmates with pro-social competency skills to help change behaviors that lead to incarceration in the first place.

Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) describe agency being associated with intentional and reflective actions. Furthering this momentum for change is the cognitive shift that precipitates the transformation process. This action is led by the individual's creative capacity for selective attention and foresight. What follows includes the actor opening doors to certain stimuli and closing doors to others. This is what the authors call an organizing process. Thus the actor begins to organize their world setting up the possibility for change. Potentially, prosocial features of the environment can be referred as catalysts for change, which the authors also refer to as "hooks for change." Two reasons they are referred to as hooks including the actor's own role in choosing opportunities within the given environment and the narrative the actor engages in throughout the process.

Four types of cognitive transformation experienced by the actor begin with the first and most fundamental shift which is the actor's openness to change. From a pragmatic point of view this openness may stem from a simple desire to be released and live within society. Openness to change associated with inmate education may be correlated with program completion as a condition of release, curiosity, desire to

escape the stagnation of the cell or section, and the reputation of the course among inmates.

The second kind of cognitive shift relates to the actor being exposed to a specific hook for change. The hook draws the actor into the process. The hook in the case of inmates could be successful release from jail and autonomy. Other hooks could include the hope of or opportunity for change, an epiphany, willingness to try something new, or the prospect of personal goal achievement. The third type of transformation happens when the actor begins to conceive a replacement self in place of the marginal self, which can eventually be left behind. Finally, the fourth type of cognitive change takes place in the way the actor conceptualizes the marginal self and the accompanying lifestyle. The authors posit these four fundamental cognitive transformation steps relate to each other and inspire and direct behavior. These cognitive shifts along with agentic moves that are associated with them can lead to behavior changes fundamental to desistance.

As stated previously, research indicates that focusing on inmate education is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention (Banse, Koppee-Gossel, Kistemaker, Werber, & Schmidt, 2013; Choate & Normore, 2013; Layton-MacKenzie, 2008; Ronel & Elisha, 2011; Ubah & Robinson, 2003; Vacca, 2004). The economic cost of housing inmates affects every citizen, therefore determining innovative methods to produce internal transformation should be a national priority.

ROPES Course Overview

ROPES evolved through contextual trial and error and didactic anthology. Initially, I created and taught an eight-session conflict resolution course for female youth

facing long-term detainment. The training included listening skills, thinking patterns, emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, body language, assertive statements, and conflict styles. Having focused on high-risk female probationers earlier in my career as a probation officer, I observed common deficiency patterns in communication and interactions associated with this demographic. Weaving together my experience as a probation officer and my growing expertise in the conflict resolution field I created “Girls Group” and worked as a volunteer instructor for two years prior to making the leap to adult incarcerates.

Transitioning from an instinctual-based course for youth to a structured, research-based jail curriculum had little effect on the overall curriculum. Girls Group components were synthesized with research on recidivism reduction and desistance to create a ten-session program implemented in adult jail settings. The ultimate goal is to move participants beyond their social deficits to reach out and purposefully collaborate with others in order to resolve conflict.

Although the transition from Girl’s Group to ROPES was fairly straightforward, implementation of the study proved quite laborious, taking almost a year, rendering it worthy of mention in this dissertation. ROPES was taught in the facility for a year prior to proposing the study to jail administration. The first step was to locate an appropriate research assistant. Once an assistant was identified I moved on to seek approval from jail administration. The next level of approval needed was from the county and included meticulous negotiations with the county’s civil attorneys, which lasted three months. Following county approval was approval from the State of Utah Department of

Corrections, which was simple and swift. Finally, approval through Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was required. This level of approval took a couple of months and was more straightforward than expected. Although, in hindsight, I worked meticulously to insure approvability. Even so, revisions were in order.

By June of 2015, all levels of approval had been obtained to commence a study involving inmates. It was at this point that the original research assistant, attained and approved nine months earlier, dropped out of the study. Crushing heartbreaks are more common than one would think on dissertation journeys. The good news is I had a back-up research assistant. The bad news is that person was now unavailable. After contacting several local institutions who agreed to post my research assistant (RA) flyer, I was able to find a research assistant. However, it had nothing to do with the institutions I contacted. A month after the original research assistant dropped out, I found the new research assistant at Massage Envy, where I go to get massages. By the time the new RA completed CITI training, almost one year had transpired since I first started the approval process. This tale demonstrates that conflict is everywhere.

Conflict settlement and conflict resolution differ. Whereas the former often employs a method of controlling conflict escalation and the scope of the conflict, the latter seeks to settle a disagreement, allowing parties to move past conflict (Cloke, 2001). In their book *Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills* (2011), authors Katz, Lawyer, and Koppelman-Sweedler, define conflict resolution as having two components. The first includes conflict analysis. At this stage parties move past personal positions in an effort to understand the other's interest. The second component includes employing a

resolution method that will cultivate agreement and problem-solving. A variety of problem-solving and communication skills can be used to reach resolution depending on the context of the conflict and the knowledge and abilities of those involved. Kenneth Cloke, author of *Mediating Dangerously* (2001), adds an interesting perspective, stating that conflict resolution “recognizes the inevitability of conflict, and its potential to generate positive outcomes” (p. 17). He goes on to say that for full resolution, one must “fully surface underlying concerns, encourage equal ownership of outcomes, negotiate collaboratively, and fix systems rather than people” (p. 17). Recognition and use of emotional intelligence skills bolster the resolution process allowing parties to move beyond destructive emotions and reactivity to a place of empathy, resulting in collaboration (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). This forms the foundation for ROPES.

ROPES is a ten-session course that includes an experiential learning environment and strength-based training. The certificate of completion contributes toward their “mapping” or overall efforts toward rehabilitation but is not explicitly counted toward *good time*. Certificates are awarded upon 70% completion of class expectations or eight out of twelve points. One point is awarded for each class attended (10 points possible) and one point is awarded for demonstration of having read the two texts used in ROPES (2 points possible). These resources include *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl (1959) and *Forgive for Good* by Dr. Fred Luskin (2002).

Each session follows a general format comprised of a welcome, expression of appreciation, discussion of out-of-class assignment(s), topic introduction, educational component followed by an exercise or component application. In session five,

mindfulness meditation and circle processes are introduced. Mindfulness meditation is practiced for approximately five minutes and includes controlled breathing techniques with focused attention in an effort to calm anxiety. Circle process is a structured dialogue technique often associated with restorative justice used to discuss issues of importance. The idea behind circle process is to create a safe environment where people feel they can open up and share meaningful information with each other. Class sessions are 90 minutes and includes assignments to be completed after class. Total time investment for participants is approximately 30 hours.

Individual ROPES Modules

Session one. Session one includes introduction to the program including facility rules, participant rules, and instructor rules. In this session participants are given an overview of the program including the theoretical framework, curriculum, and requirements to earn a certificate of completion. After the initial class overview, a conflict exercise is conducted and elements of conflict are taught which includes each participant identifying their own physical indications of conflict such as sweaty palms, clenched teeth, or a racing heart rate.

Session two. The topic for session two is active listening skills including attending and body language. Participants take part in exercises that demonstrate difficulty in listening while multitasking along with complications achieving clear communication. Participants then take part in an exercise, which emphasizes listening alternatively and discretely for facts and feelings and reflecting back to the speaker what was heard. The session two assignment includes asking the following question: “What is

it like to communicate with me?” For this assignment, participants are encouraged to be mindful of whom they ask as well as their own reactions to feedback.

Session three. The topic of session three is thoughts and perceptions. This class includes concepts from neuroscience, holistic health, and quantum physics. The experiential exercises incorporated in this session demonstrate how thinking negative thoughts effects our physiology. The class demonstrates the benefits of meta-cognition and replacing negative thoughts with normative or positive thoughts or cognitive restructuring. Participants also learn how appreciation changes physiology and perceptions and the benefits of healthy self-talk. Out-of-class assignments include a *Stinking Thinking* worksheet, *Positive Self-talk* worksheet, and keeping an *appreciation journal* for six days, noting a minimum of three things to be thankful for each day.

Session four. Emotional intelligence is introduced in session four. Infused in the lesson are physiological chemicals such as dopamine, endorphin, serotonin, and oxytocin and how these chemicals direct behavior. The lesson includes self-talk (must be personal, powerful, positive, and present), consequences of avoiding or suppressing emotions, and an exercise, in which participants contemplate their current emotional footprint versus their ideal emotional footprint. Participants are asked to draw depictions of each and to identify one step they can take in their current situation to move toward their ideal emotional foot-print. Out-of-class work for session four is to continue reading *Man's Search for Meaning* and to complete a worksheet that identifies those people/places/things they move toward and the ones they move away from.

Session five. Session five is focused on emotional awareness. As stated above, circle processes and mindfulness exercises are introduced in this session. The circle process is a structured dialogue process often associated with restorative justice practices and creates a space for speaking and listening to each other on equal footing. In this practice, a talking piece is passed around the circle from person to person and only the participant holding the talking piece may speak. All other participants listen intently without interrupting until the talking piece reaches them. Participants are given the option to pass the talking piece without speaking if desired. Circle processes are used to discuss issues of importance in a non-partial and structured manner.

Thoughts and observations on *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl, 1959) are discussed within the context of the first circle. Mindfulness exercises introduce the technique of using breath to calm oneself as well as the skill of focusing one's attention. It is a space for quiet reflection and focused breathing. Participants are directed to become aware of their physical selves and use their breath as a calming mechanism. This session also highlights the connection between values and emotions. The out-of-class assignment includes keeping a journal of their emotions for six days. Additionally, they are asked to begin contemplating an individual social or communication skill they would like to work on for the duration of the program.

Session six. Session six expands on emotional awareness and embraces emotional expression. A vocabulary for identifying emotions and assertive statements are introduced, along with the next book, *Forgive for Good* by Dr. Fred Luskin. Students participate in an exercise, which allows them to become familiar with their reactions to

conflict, identify markers of emotional excitation, and to create a planned response for future conflict. This session is concluded using the circle process to share emotions elicited during a past family situation. The emotion can be either negative or positive. Inmates have shared stories of joy during a holiday or wedding, stories of shame from disappointing family member with continued drug use, and stories of sorrow and regret from the death of a child or loved one during their incarceration. Circle process is a significant opportunity and a safe space for inmates for open up about long-held pain and disappointment as well as an opportunity to practice self-discipline, active listening, and empathy skills.

Session seven. Impulse control and submissive, assertive, and aggressive communication styles are the topic of session seven. Impulse control training includes a handout with three specific skills to use as an intervention when negative emotional momentum begins to build. Participants are asked to choose one skill they are willing to employ and practice during the upcoming week. The submissive/assertive/aggressive continuum describes the three communication styles and concludes with an exercise in creating an assertive statement. The out-of-class assignment includes detailing an assertive statement for a past or current situation that has caused them distress.

Session eight. In session eight participants learn social responsibility through the context of restorative justice principles and societal labeling. Ramifications from negative labeling is taught through the book *You Are Special* by Max Lucado (1997). Next, participants create a mantra for themselves based on the principles of self-talk (positive, present, personal, and powerful) to refer to during times of crisis or need. Restorative

justice principles are taught and participants divide into groups to create a fictitious reentry community program (Youtopia) for inmates released back into the community, explaining three primary community values conditional for group inclusion and methods for dealing with violators of those values. The assignment is to work on reading *Forgive for Good*.

Session nine. Empathy is the topic of session nine, which then transitions to individualized conflict contingency plans based on a compilation of exercises, information, and skills from all of the previous lessons. Instruction on empathy includes a definition of empathy, descriptions, including empathy versus sympathy, and ways participants can display empathy in jail. Using a comparison exercise between themselves and the guards, inmates are challenged to consider the complexities the guards experience associated with their duties. Next, they are asked to consider their own capacity to empathize with the guard's dilemma. This typically results in one of the most animated dialogues in the ROPES course. The conflict contingency plan is a culmination worksheet consisting of all lessons and exercises to remind participants of their triggers, their strengths, and the new skills they've acquired throughout the course.

Session ten. In session ten, the participants present a chapter they have chosen from the book *Forgive for Good*, which is followed by a general discussion about the concept of forgiveness. Inmates then act out a skit exhibiting a typical jail dilemma and a resolution to the dilemma based on skills and concepts acquired within the course. The program culminates in a final circle process in which each inmate is given an opportunity

to make a closing statement. Certificates of completion are awarded before class is dismissed for the last time.

With criminal justice reform roaring to the forefront of the American consciousness, many questions remain unanswered. What must be done to change the course of incarceration rates in the United States and what can we do to re-absorb a largely institutionalized prison population into society? The goal of this study was to advance the hypothesis that the development of social competency skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy can lead to internal transformation, create pro-social behavior, and result in better relationships. These skills are vital for the successful negotiation of various aspects of society. This study addressed questions largely ignored within the current literature on how the inmate population responds when introduced to these pro-social conflict resolution skills.

Problem Statement

As stated previously, the lack of conflict resolution skills permeates and defines the growing inmate population. This acknowledgment comes at a pivotal time in criminal justice history. An article by Alex Altman and Mava Rhodan (2015) in Time.com, dispatches the details of a press conference announcing a bipartisan effort to reform the criminal justice system. The reform is the result of a variety of current issues and circumstances such as skyrocketing incarceration costs and profound racial disparities. The bill known as the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act represents a crucial change in direction for criminal justice. Coinciding with sentencing reform is a call for

renewed programming efforts aimed at helping inmates cope and manage societal pressures.

Few inmate programs focus primarily on conflict resolution. Furthermore, locating phenomenological research delineating the inmate experience following a holistic conflict resolution course has proven futile. This study addresses these gaps in inmate education and provides insight to the experiences of inmates participating in a holistic conflict resolution course.

Purpose of the Study

In that the dilemma of incarceration and rehabilitation has reached an apex, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe participant's perceptions of the ROPES course in an effort to add to the body of research defining effective training methods with inmates. At this stage in the research, ROPES is generally defined as a holistic conflict resolution course designed to address and teach conflict resolution skills in order to bolster inmate skill base. Phenomenology is a fundamental component of this study to assess perceptions and levels of change, achieved through cognitive-behavioral coaching. Research shows internal transformation is an essential element of recidivism reduction (Layton-MacKenzie, 2000, 2008; Ronel & Elisha 2011). The purpose of this study was to describe the effects of a holistically designed, ten-session, conflict resolution course on inmate self-efficacy.

Research Question

This study encompasses a phenomenological assessment of a holistic, conflict resolution training model for inmates. Transcendental phenomenology aims to understand

the essence of a phenomena experienced by a group of people. The interview questions are central for evoking non-coerced, non-directive, open responses related to how ROPES graduates perceived the training. The interview structure allows participants to articulate socially constructed views of their experience by providing space and consideration during the interview process. The interview questions were designed to elicit answers to the central research question: What effect does holistic conflict resolution training have on inmate self-efficacy?

Interview questions. Interviews commenced with participants being asked: “Can you describe in as much detail as possible, your perceptions of conflict resolution following the ROPES course?” This open-ended format allows for a broad range of responses. Next, participants were asked: “Do you believe your ability to deal with conflict has changed following ROPES, and if so how?” This question began to narrow the scope of the experience and prompt the responder to insert examples. Study participants were then asked: “Have you made any changes as a result of participating in ROPES? Can you describe those changes?” This question prompted for specifics regarding change and examples to delineate those changes.

Question four asked: “What stood out to you about the training? Why?” and was probing for training elements that affected them. The question was purposefully broad to allow for an array of experiences to be identified. The following question: “Has the ROPES course helped you during your incarceration? Please share an example,” asked participants to identify aspects of ROPES that might be conducive to application during incarceration. Similarly, the next question asked: “What, if any, components of ROPES

will be helpful to you upon reentry to the community? Why do you think they will be helpful?” Participants were challenged to identify skills or techniques they believed can be used upon reentry into the community.

Question seven asked, “What changes would you suggest to refine the ROPES program?” and invited study participants to help refine the program. The last question: “Is there anything else you want to share about your experience in the ROPES course?” provided space at the end of the interview for participants to address features of the course that may have been missed by previous questions and provided closure to the interview process. Participants were given ample time and space and were encouraged to answer questions to the best of their ability and recollection in an effort to gain understanding of their experience. The interview format shadowed etiquette taught in the ROPES course and dovetailed with the theoretical perspectives used to create the course. A description of those theories are described below.

Theoretical Perspectives

This study was influenced by several theoretical perspectives including: (a) human needs theory, (b) hope theory, (c) social construction theory, (d) appreciative inquiry, and (e) restorative justice principles. These theoretical frameworks were divided into two categories. The first categorical perspective covered the scope of the dissertation and included human needs theory and hope theory. The second categorical perspective covered the scope of the course curriculum and included social construction theory, appreciative inquiry, and restorative justice principles. The following is a brief explanation of the theories which formulated the backdrop for this study.

Human Needs Theory. The initial theoretical framework was human needs theory. This theory is based on the conflict theory perspective as presented by John W. Burton. Burton proposed that eight basic human needs must be met as a pre-condition for conflict resolution. These needs include esteem, meaning, identity, control, justice, security, stimulation (both rational and emotional), and peace (Burton & Sandole, 1986). As pre-conditions are satisfied, stress is reduced and parties are placed in a better position for interpersonal interactions. Burton was influenced by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs along with Erich Fromm and Henry Murray's social psychological work on biological drives, which he expanded in order to analyze the field of conflict resolution. Human needs theory fit both the overall dissertation umbrella and was reflected in the curriculum under topics such as esteem (empowerment through skill development), meaning (Man's Search for Meaning), justice (restorative justice), identity (emotional intelligence concepts), and peace (conflict resolution).

Human needs theory pertained to internal drives that perpetuate behavior. The inmate population is known for conflict involvement whether it be intrapersonal, interpersonal, or societal. Conflict is perceived as an expectation, default status, and even way of life in jail. Often times, mastery of conflict in the forms of street fighting, intimidation, or bullying is a badge of honor with this population. It fills unmet identity needs for people who lack access to other forms of status such as higher education, entrepreneurship, or employment. A large portion of this demographic lack the skills needed to negotiate conflict appropriately. They either witnessed poor conflict resolution

modelling, were never taught conflict resolution skills, or declined to participate in available conflict resolution instruction.

The human needs framework helps explain offenders, lacking proper skills, who get their needs met, however, their interactions with others result in system involvement. The interview questions, along with the underlying theoretical frameworks intend to uncover the experience of conflict resolution training as experienced by this complicated and compromised population. Interview questions such as: “What, if any, components of ROPES will be helpful to you upon reentry to the community? Why do you think they will be helpful?” seek to understand the participant’s thoughts not only about reentry into society but also about any new skills they can practice upon release. Next, hope theory provides a different paradigm essential among inmates to move forward.

Hope Theory. Hope theory was the other theoretical framework covering the scope of this dissertation. According to Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2005), “...hopeful thought reflects the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use those pathways” (p. 257). In addition, the authors believed “...hope, so defined, serves to drive the emotions and well-being of people” (p. 257). Hope theory complements social construction theory and appreciative inquiry (below) with its reliance on affirming internal messages and agentic thinking accompanied by positive self-narrative. Hope theory does not characterize hope as an emotion but focuses on the cognitive component of hope, believing that the emotional aspect will ensue. Hope for the future is central in the hearts and dreams of many inmates. Although not all inmates embrace hope for the future, reaching those that do is the goal of the course. Further, the

concept is studied and emphasized directly through the use of Viktor Frankl's work *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959) and indirectly through skill development.

Social Construction Theory. Social construction theory was incorporated in ROPES as an ongoing theme and framed interactions, class exercises, and assignments. Social construction theory is a postmodern, critically-based theory, which denies classical mega-perspectives and encourages inquiry as opposed to unquestioned acquiescence. As an example, Kenneth Gergen, in his book *An Invitation to Social Construction* (2009), explains constructionist's challenge of the absolute of scientific knowledge. Constructionists believe that reality is created through words and that multiple realities exist simultaneously (Gergen, 2009). Another major principle of constructionism is that 'self' or 'identity' is created within relationships. A component of these relationships includes emotions. Gergen states "emotions are not the private possessions of the individual mind, but are the property of ongoing relationship" (p. 106). As such, we can see how "identity" as depicted in human needs theory, which is typically a precursor for conflict resolution can be stunted as a result of incarceration, resulting in additional conflict.

Social construction theory provided an idyllic backdrop for concepts utilized in ROPES. Some of the concepts that correlated particularly well with ROPES lessons included: (a) words are energy, which contain power; (b) self-talk changes perceptions; and (c) capacity to create a sense of self through story-sharing, which also helps to reshape our perceptions and express our emotions. Constructionism is fertile soil for change. Gergen posited, "the moment we begin to speak together, we have the potential

to create new ways of being” (p. 29). Another theoretical framework which worked well in the ROPES course and shared similar features as social construction theory was appreciative inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry. The next theoretical framework incorporated in the ROPES course curriculum was appreciative inquiry (AI). Appreciative inquiry is a strength-based perspective for problem-solving created by David Cooperride and Suresh Srivastva, along with other graduate students from Case Western University in the 1980’s. Appreciative inquiry challenges the classical problem-based model, rather, opening doors of opportunity and change through the power of inquiry (Binkert & Clancy, 2011). Underlying the inquisitive approach are concepts such as (a) something works within every society, organization, or group; (b) what we focus on becomes reality; (c) reality or multiple realities are created in the moment; (d) questioning as a form of influence; (e) taking comfort going forward by taking parts of one’s past; (f) choosing to take only the best parts to moving forward; (g) valuing differences; and, (h) creating reality through language. Other guiding principles include: (a) the positive principle—positive affect and social bonds are needed to create momentum for change, (b) the simultaneity principle—change and inquiry happen at the same time, (c) the poetic principle—invites individuals to view themselves as a puzzle to be solved or book of possibilities rather than a problem, and (d) the anticipatory principle—humans have endless resources to create constructive changes using imagination and dialogue about the future (Binkert & Clancy, 2011). Lastly, restorative justice concludes the theoretical introduction to this research study.

Restorative Justice. Restorative justice (RJ) principles were incorporated into the ROPES course curricula. Restorative justice dovetailed with emotional intelligence in that restorative procedures create a safe space for both victims and offenders to express individual emotions. According to Susanne Karstedt (2002), restorative justice procedures have become the most successful reform movement in criminal justice world-wide. The restorative justice paradigm encourages all members of society to live life in a manner that benefits all. One of the tenets of restorative justice is that individual behavior has an overall effect on societal members. In Barbara Toews' book, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice for People in Prison* (2006), she described society as a "web of relationships" (p. 13). She stated that "through strong connections to others, we meet our basic needs for safety, love, self-worth, comfort, and even food and shelter. In a strong web, everyone is equal in worth, has access to power, along with the right to a meaningful life" (p. 13). Toews' description of the ideal society with strong connections to family and friends isn't always the case. Difficulties that accompany interconnectedness loom, ever-present. Toews states "Family, friends, and others let us down. We do the same to them, intentionally or unintentionally. When left unattended, these broken relationships distort the web, forcing it out of balance" (p. 14).

The principles of restorative justice propose an alternative to retributive justice and integrate all parties effected by the crime including offenders, victims, victim's and offender's families, and community members to help bring resolution. Core values of restorative justice include respect, care, trust, and humility. Other tenets of restorative justice state that everyone in a community is affected by crime and individual healing

affects community healing. Offender accountability includes the concept of choice in relation to committing crime and acknowledgement that the victim is not responsible for the crime or the sentence.

Toews advocated for inmates to create a restorative living practice within the facility setting. In this way, inmates begin to acknowledge the impact their behavior has on those around them and resolve to improve it. Restorative living includes ideas such as listen more and talk less, being kind, practicing non-violence, refraining from gossip, meditating and listening to relaxing music, and seeking your personal inner power and taking control of your life.

These three theories, then, were formulated to provide methods and structure for exiting a perpetual state of conflict and entering into a place of new possibilities. This place includes the potential for change, the potential for skill building, and the potential for transformation, when ready. One way to observe individual changes is through narrative. As such, a qualitative design incorporating face-to-face, open-ended interview questions was chosen for this initial study to understand the essence of the ROPES course. Phenomenological design studies are uniquely qualified to achieve this goal. Interview questions that target the possibility for change include question two, which asked: “Do you believe your ability to deal with conflict has changed following ROPES; and if so how? (Prompt: Can you provide an example?)” Another interview question targeting change is question number three: “Have you made any changes as a result of participating in ROPES? (Prompt: Can you describe those changes?)”

Choosing a guiding paradigm for implementation of an inmate program created a unique challenge specifically as it pertained to alternative corrections perspectives and the supporting research. Positive criminology is a set of principles and practices for working with corrections clients that contributes toward the desistance process. Ronel & Elisah (2011) described it as including themes of encounters with positive influences, emphasizing positive social elements such as goodness and social acceptance, and promoting positive personal traits such as coherence and resilience. This is a shift from problem-and-treatment-only perspectives to a more comprehensive paradigm where recovery is a gradual process and is solved through the development of physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, and occupational health. In this perspective, relapse is considered part of the process. Participants were encouraged to replace negative behaviors with positive ones. Evidence-based practice related to positive psychology and wellness in corrections is in an early phase of development. These new practices have found footing recently and research is beginning to show merit in the model. These theories and concepts will be discussed at greater depth in Chapter 2.

The Nature of the Study

The research method utilized for this qualitative study was phenomenology. Phenomenological research attempts to understand a common lived experience among individuals by gathering narrative and written data and analyzing the data in order to understand the experience. In John W. Creswell's book, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (2007), he stated that "the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences of a specific phenomenon to a description of the universal

essence” (p. 58). This methodological approach was chosen as the perspective best able to chronicle and understand internal dynamics resulting from participation in the ROPES course. Information was yielded through open-ended questions during tape recorded, face-to-face interviews.

One purpose of the research design was to link the participant’s experiences to the theoretical frameworks used within this study. Therefore, the question design elicited participant perspectives in relation to agency and conflict resolution. Questions targeted components of the program, which produced skill change, personal change, or transformation. In addition, questions targeted conflict resolution skills and abilities practiced during incarceration as well as skills and abilities thought to be useful upon reentry.

Phenomenology, with its in-depth deconstruction of lived experiences, is an ideal methodological approach for studying the effects holistic conflict resolution training had on inmate self-efficacy. The key concepts this research is probing for are changes in perceptions and agency in relation to conflict resolution. In addition, the research sought to assess, which element of training brought about changes. Participants included thirteen female and male inmates incarcerated in the State of Utah. General population inmates who maintained a qualifying behavior level were allowed to attend jail education courses. Therefore, participants included inmates considered to be in good standing with staff and excluded inmates relegated to maximum security. Further, inmates scheduled for release during the course term are eliminated from attending as well as inmates who had other educational courses or work duties that coincide with ROPES. Criminal charges were not

taken into consideration and were not disclosed to the instructor throughout the duration of the course to prevent bias.

Study participants were culled from an aggregate group of participants who have completed the ROPES course and were incarcerated in the facility at the time the study was conducted. A list of qualifying inmates was sent to the facility's Program Coordinator who will disperse the *Invitation to Participate in the ROPES Course Study* to the inmates inviting them to an informed consent meeting. Meetings with qualifying inmates were arranged by gender and pod. At the informed consent meeting, individual interview sessions were set up and a schedule was given to the Program Coordinator for room scheduling.

Once data was collected and transcribed, data analysis follows and included several detailed steps such as examining descriptions of the personal experiences of participants and developing a list of significant statements. Next, statements were grouped into meaning units or themes. Identifying significant statements explaining participant's experience is referred to as 'horizontalization' by Moustakas (Creswell, 2007). This reduction process allows the researcher to identify clusters of meaning. Next, the researcher writes *what* participants experienced (textural description) and *how* they experienced it (structural description). During this process, the researcher explains their own experience within the context of the research genre, which might influence the outcome of the research (Creswell, 2007). The final interpretive step was to form a comprehensive picture of the shared experience by combining the textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon representing the essence of the experience.

Definitions

Agency. The perceived capacity to use one's pathways so as to reach desired goals (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2005, p. 258).

Agentic thinking. The capacity to use pathways to reach a goal. Agentic thinking includes self-referential thoughts about embarking on and making progress toward goal achievement, particularly useful when barriers are encountered (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2005, p. 258).

Behavior modification. Utilizing rewards and/or penalties to reinforce appropriate behavior and positive behavioral changes.

Cognitive-behavioral coaching. The goal is to change cognitions, making them more positive, thereby reducing distress and allowing renewed effort (Carver & Scheier, 2005).

Cognitive restructuring. Activities and exercises that target thinking errors in an effort to recognize and modify the distortions and errors thereby reducing criminogenic thinking.

Cognitive skills. Thinking and decision-making skills training focusing on concepts such as impulse control, problem-solving, consequential thinking, and appropriate behavior and decision making.

Conflict resolution. A process, which includes two components: (a) Conflict analysis where parties move past personal positions in an effort to understand the other's interest; (b) employing a resolution method that will cultivate agreement and problem-solving. (Katz, Lawyer, & Sweedler, 2011)

Desistance. Primary desistance is described as any lull or crime free gap in the course of a criminal career (Travis & Visher, 2005, p. 144). Secondary desistance is when the existing role of the criminal becomes disrupted and reorganization based upon a new role or roles occur (Travis & Visher, 2005, p. 145).

Desistance studies. Desistance studies focus, as their name implies, on the factors that lead offenders to stop offending. The empirical base on which their theorizing rests is typically, but not exclusively, qualitative in-depth interviews carried out with ex-offenders (Hough, 2010, p. 15).

Emotional intelligence. The possession and use of the ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behavior to achieve social tasks and outcomes valued in the host context and culture (Bar-On & Parker, 2000, p. 32).

Empathy. The ability to understand, be aware of, be sensitive to, and vicariously experience the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another. (Hughes & Bradford Terrell, 2012, p. 71)

Experimental criminology. Finding ways to reduce harm from crime and injustice.

Interpersonal problem-solving. Problem-solving skills training dealing with relational conflict and peer pressure.

Moral reasoning. Moral development training activities designed to enhance reasoning skills and decipher right and wrong behavior.

Multimodal. An approach to psychotherapy based on the idea that human beings think, feel, act, sense, imagine, and interact and that psychological treatment should address each of these modalities.

Pathways thinking. An element of goal pursuits that includes the process of considering the ways to achieve desired goals and works in conjunction with affirming internal messages (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2005, p. 258).

Positive criminology. A recent term describing perspectives, theories, and models that relate to socially inclusive, positive influences that help individuals reach desistance or refrain from criminal and deviant behavior (Ronel & Elisha, 2011).

Recidivism. The tendency to relapse into previous non-productive behavior, specifically, criminal behavior.

Reentry. The process whereby a convicted person is returned to the community (Maruna and LeBel, 2003).

Self-efficacy. The conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).

Social skills. Training in pro-social behaviors, interpreting social cues, taking other people's feelings into account, and the like.

Strength-based perspectives. A belief in the basic goodness of humankind, a faith that individuals, however unfortunate their plight, can discover strengths in themselves that they never knew existed (Van Wormer, 1999, p. 51).

Strength-based practice. A mindset to approach clients with a greater concern for their strengths and competencies and to discover mutually how these personal

resources can be applied to building solutions. This perspective calls for clients to have equal (or better) partnership in the helping process (Clark, 1998, p. 46).

Untested Assumptions

A core belief of this study was that emotions are powerful feelings that move us to action. Further, that inmates have not been taught appropriate methods to help recognize, understand, and express emotions, particularly in conflict, and have witnessed maladaptive emotional displays. Therefore, training inmates in emotional intelligence along with basic communication skills begins the process of replacing maladaptive behaviors with socially acceptable conflict resolution skills. A core belief used to create ROPES curriculum was that “knowledge is power.” Inmates are often treated as though they have limited capacity to understand information. I believe they have more capacity than they are given credit for. Therefore, the curriculum was created for inmates based on the assumption that they are able to comprehend a variety of concepts. This was not tested however, as grade-level placement testing was not taken into consideration when considering ROPES participants.

Finally, positive criminology as a working paradigm with inmates assumes that the demeanor one uses in these interactions is impactful. During jail orientation instructors are told not to divulge their full names or any personal information. Further, they are warned to be on their guard and to be mindful of the manipulative propensity associated with this population and, obviously, to be diligent of physical safety concerns. Aside from these cautions, one is left to their own devices to negotiate interactions with inmates. Positive criminology concurred with personal instincts that have guided me

throughout my criminal justice career. These instincts believe that most people, inmates included, respond to being treated with respect. The study design and questions were not constructed to measure positive criminology, per se, however, the practice has been used throughout the life of the ROPES course.

Scope and Delimitations

The goal of this study was to describe the experience of holistic conflict resolution training as experienced by inmates. Further, the study investigated components of self-efficacy in conflict resolution associated with training. The focus was chosen in an effort to discern aspects of empowerment before and after ROPES. Inmates are regularly taught life skills such as parenting and cognitive skills. Few courses, found to date, focus primarily on conflict resolution skills.

This study included male and female inmates incarcerated in a Utah jail. The inmates must have completed the ROPES course, received a certificate, and still be quartered in the jail at the time the study is conducted. Inmates were eighteen years of ages and older. There were no academic qualifications for participation. Inmates must have been in good standing with jail administration and be located in general population. This study excluded federal inmates who completed ROPES and received a certificate. This study also excluded inmates who completed ROPES but were released from the facility prior to the study.

The study did not undertake concepts regarding motivational interviewing, strain theory, social control theory, therapeutic jurisprudence, reintegrative shaming, systems theory, or procedural justice. Although these concepts and theoretical frameworks hover

closely to the chosen topic the scope of this study was limited due to time, space, and focus. Further, frameworks were intentionally chosen to reflect a positive aspect of criminal justice and the possibilities of change within the system. The stated topics above were held out as potential further studies in the arena of strength-based and solution-focused inmate education praxis.

Limitations

A central belief underlying both the ROPES course and the study was that lack of confidence in one's self coupled with poor skills leads to negative spirals and ideation that reinforced the lack of confidence. These factors along with pathology-based care leads offenders further into a negative spiral, often leading to dependence on a system that perpetuates the spiral. The physical and psychological separation of inmates from mainstream society coupled with pervasive negative attitudes towards incarcerates exacerbates reentry woes and demonstrates little concern for social capital. The absence of reentry courts, formal procedures, and neighborhoods eager to accept released inmates are examples of perpetuating a pathologically-based system.

This study was limited in a couple of ways. Qualitative methodology was chosen as an initial assessment for the ROPES course as the primary researcher views qualitative data as a natural first step. However, more data, including quantitative, and a narrower scope of focus will help identify strengths and weaknesses of the program. In addition, data from various facilities would help delineate transferability. A fundamental limitation inherent in corrections education includes the nebulous nature of delivering education within the system. Inmates are rotated in and out of pods and facilities, often will little

prior notice. In addition, they often are moved from level to level based on their behavior. The result of this movement can be the removal of privileges including the ability to participate in classes. Therefore, a class size of fourteen one day, may shrink to become a class of five the next and vice versa. Another limitation of the study was partisanship, that being, the researcher and the program creator are one and the same person. For this reason, a research assistant was utilized to obtain the qualitative data in an effort to buffer prejudice.

Significance and Potential Advances in Knowledge

The curriculum is dynamic and multi-modal and, if validated, will help advance the concept of teaching conflict resolution within a holistic paradigm as a catalyst for change. As it has been proven that external deterrent systems are largely ineffective toward long-term, internal change, this study devotes much hope and effort toward internal transformation. Further, the concept of inmates as pathological persons could be reconsidered and given renewed identity and recognition allowing greater transformational space, moving inmates toward desistance. Ultimately, if this genre of curriculum shows promise, it contributes toward a current trend in positive criminological research forming a new path in penological education.

Summary

Chapter one summarized the premises on which this study was built and revealed various aspects of the study beginning with holistic praxis, how conflict contributes toward criminality, and research demonstrating that education leads to desistance. The

chapter provided an overview of inmate education including current research showing promise. The chapter then transitioned to the history behind the creation of the course, a description of the course, and the theoretical perspectives that frame both the study and the course.

Next, was an overview of the problem statement, followed by the purpose of the study, and the underlying research question. Following the research question was an explanation of the five theoretical frameworks used to cover both the scope of the study and the scope of the course. The chapter progresses to defining terms used within the context of the study, reviewing untested assumptions, reviewing scope and delimitations, and discussing the limitations of the study. The chapter closed with the significance of the study and possible contributions towards existing knowledge.

Because inmate programs focusing on holistic conflict resolution skills are rare, this phenomenological study aimed to understand the experience of inmates who participated in such a program. Included in this review is the purpose of incorporating positive criminology as a foundation for working with inmates. In chapter two, these concepts are expounded upon through the literature in order to provide additional insights and form a greater understanding of the nature of this problem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. Psalm 69:33 (King James Version)

Introduction

Lack of conflict resolution skills permeate and define the swelling inmate population in the United States. Inmate programs which focus primarily on holistic conflict resolution skills are rare. This phenomenological study seeks to understand the experience of inmates who participated in a holistic conflict resolution program. When this study was established in the fall of 2013 there were traces of unrest between law enforcement and the communities they serve throughout the United States. However, in the interim a backlash has erupted throughout the U.S. bringing scrutiny upon the criminal justice system. In addition, documentaries such as “Making a Murderer,” the story about Steven Avery on Netflix and slogans such as “Black Lives Matter” have reinforced the swelling backlash, sustaining growing discontentedness. This has resulted in scrutiny of the system among the general public. The discerning political stance of both our former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and President Barak Obama have served to validate the public opinion of the criminal justice system. The timeliness and relevance of the topic of practices within the criminal justice is impeccable.

This literature review explores conceptual areas relevant to inmate conflict resolution skills including factors related to social skills deficits and dynamics leading to incarceration. Specific factors impeding effective conflict resolution include unmet human needs, lack of access to education, poor coping skills, lack of resources, and a lack

of prosocial modeling. The research indicates that internal transformation is essential to recidivism reduction (Layton-MacKenzie, 2000, 2008; Ronel & Elisha 2011). This literature review draws connections between the poor skills of inmates and an inability to resolve conflict in order to reduce recidivism. A review of theoretical and conceptual paradigms incorporated in the ROPES course includes concepts such as the role of perceptions, emotions, emotional intelligence, and personal narratives in conflict resolution. In addition, past and present prison programs addressing social competencies for inmates are synthesized.

Dynamics Associated with Incarceration

Americans depend on the criminal justice system to maintain safety and civil order in society. However, with a total of approximately 7.3 million Americans either incarcerated or on probation or parole and with a 290% increase in the prison population since 1980, solutions to this pressing issue are more critical than ever (Wexler, Lurigio, & Rodriguez, 2011). Several theories exist regarding the rise in incarceration rates. John F. Pfaff posits high incarceration rates were ushered in with the inability of the welfare system to provide traditional benefits. A tough-on-crime mentality became the new political mantra replacing “social welfare” rhetoric with “protection from harm” rhetoric (Pfaff, 2008).

An overview of the inmate population reveals a majority of inmates come from disadvantaged backgrounds with limited educational opportunities (Travis & Visser, 2005; Crayton & Neusteter 2008; Wakefield & Uggen 2010; Arum & Beattie 1999). Wakefield and Uggen (2010) posit that exploding prisons are not solely driven by law

violators but also by the “desire to manage the dispossessed and dishonored groups” (p. 393). Thus, they state the prisons are used to hold “the jobless, the poor, the racial minority, and the uneducated, not merely the criminal” (p. 393). In addition, they identify prisoners as those in society with the least amount of human, financial, and social capital.

Travis and Visher, in *Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America* (2005), discussed an inmate survey asking about life circumstances in order to identify criminogenic needs. The seven domains identified with criminogenic need and included in the survey encompassed education/employment, marriage/family, associates/social interactions, substance abuse, mental illness, community functioning, and personal/emotional orientation. The authors confirmed nearly all soon-to-be-released inmates reported a problem in one of the areas and the majority of inmates reported problems in multiple domains. The authors stated that approximately 84% of state inmates and 65% of federal inmates reported problems in three or more domains.

Inmate Education

Although poor academic performance has not been shown to be a direct cause of criminal behavior, research shows an inverse relationship between education and recidivism (Arum & Beattie, 1999; Travis & Visher, 2005). According to statistics, 41% of state inmates and 26% of federal prisoners do not have a high school diploma or general equivalency degree (Travis & Visher, 2005; Crayton & Neusteter 2008). In contrast, 18% of adults in the general U.S. population have not graduated from high school. Statistics show African American men with no high school degree have a 60% higher lifetime likelihood of going to jail than white high school dropouts (Wakefield &

Uggen, 2010). Twice as many black men under the age of 40 have prison records than college degrees (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). In addition, statistics show that of the 41% of inmates without a high school education or GED, only 10% of those eligible will participate in available educational opportunities (Crayton & Neusteter 2008; Tewksbury, Ericson, & Taylor, 2000). The reason for low participation is unclear. However, U.S. inmates have been called the most educationally disadvantaged population in America (Crayton & Neusteter 2008; Klein, Tolbert, Burgarin, Cataldi, & Tauschek, 2004).

While statistics reveal inmate education deficits they don't reveal character elements that are associated with a stunted secondary education. Schools have increasingly assumed the responsibility for socializing youth in America. Therefore, high school experiences are crucial for socialization and occur at a time in a youth's life when they are most likely to participate in criminal behavior (Arum & Beattie, 1999). In addition, it is a critical stage of moral, social, and psychological development (Arum & Beattie, 1999). Arum and Beattie (1999) go so far as to call high school a defining moment in one's life course and a crucial element affecting life's behaviors, next to family. They state that "Weak school attachment and poor school performance, measured as negative attitudes toward school and low grades, also increase the probability of delinquency and adult life-course trajectories associated with criminal behaviors" (p. 518).

With increasing inmate numbers, it becomes the job of the county, state, or federal system to address educational and social deficits due to lack of secondary education, lack of social competency skills, and poor coping strategies, in preparation for

community reentry. Failure to address inmate issues creates a revolving door in which widespread incarceration reinforces disadvantages, perpetuating the plight of inmates and the communities to which they will return. Prison programs focusing on social skills work to fill in gaps created by the lack of secondary education. In addition, these programs may help in the socialization and adjustment process to imprisonment including values and attitudes, which, when left unattended, do not typically translate well for community reentry or the job market (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010).

Literature Search Strategy

The search strategy for this study was a bit unorthodox. The span of time between the completion and approval of the dissertation proposal and several months of seeking various levels of approval to conduct research with inmates provided ample research opportunities. In addition, seventeen years of working with juveniles in the criminal justice system contributed toward the collection of books and articles. In preparation and creation of the course itself several topics were researched including emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, gratitude, restorative justice processes, and the evolution of criminal behavior. Following research related to class formation, research on dynamics associated with incarceration was conducted.

A formal search strategy using varying search terms such as conflict resolution and inmates began. Databases such as Pro Quest, PAIS, and Psych INFO were accessed. Comparatively, research data on inmates and conflict resolution and all associated synonyms is scant. However, once relevant articles were located, the reference section became an essential resource for additional related articles. Utilizing the snowball method

of research led to the discovery of a variety of innovative research articles. In order to devise effective training methods for inmates, an understanding of their circumstances is crucial. The following is a literature review of the theoretical frameworks and paradigms guiding this study and the ROPES curriculum.

Theoretical Foundations

This study is influenced by several theoretical perspectives including: (a) human needs theory, (b) hope theory, (c) social construction theory, (d) appreciative inquiry, and (e) restorative justice principles. These theoretical frameworks are divided into two categories. The first category covers the scope of the dissertation framework and includes human needs and hope theory. The second theoretical category influences and covers the scope of the ROPES curriculum and includes social construction theory, appreciative inquiry, and restorative justice principles. Below are the theoretical frameworks covering the scope of the dissertation and an explanation regarding their influence on this study.

Human needs theory. Human needs theory is essential for understanding human behavior. Although there is no universal agreement on the exact nature of these needs conflict theorist, John W. Burton, proposed eight basic human needs must be met as a pre-condition for conflict resolution. These needs include esteem, meaning, identity, control, justice, security, stimulation (both rational and emotional), and peace (Burton & Sandole, 1986). Burton was influenced by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs along with Erich Fromm and Henry Murray's social psychological work on biological drives, which he expanded to analyze the field of conflict resolution.

Burton is credited with introducing the human needs paradigm into the realm of international conflict resolution. In *The Power of Human Needs in World Society* (1988), authors Roger A. Coate and Jerel A. Rosati state that it is within society that an individual's needs are typically met. If not, the determination to be made is whether the individual will remain within the bounds of society to get his or her needs met or will be deterred to a deviant path for needs fulfillment. They state:

...All individuals have needs that they strive to satisfy, either by using the system, acting on the fringes, or acting as reformist or revolutionary. Given this conditions, social systems must be responsive to individual's needs, or be subject to instability and forced to change (possibly through violence or conflict). (Coate and Rosati, 1988, p. ix).

Coate and Rosati (1988) credited Burton as saying "The power of human needs is such that individuals will strive to satisfy needs, even at the cost of personal disorientation and social disruption" (p. 7). The authors agreed that deprivation of human needs had been a catalyst of social and political movements in society. They state that a developed body of literature demonstrates that if human needs are not met, particularly in the early years of development, the person will suffer physically and or psychologically. In *Positions, Needs, and Interests*, authors Marcia Koppelman-Sweedler and Brianna Black-Kent (2011) concur with needs theory within the context of conflict, stating: "conflicts are actually about underlying needs and interests" (2011, p. 105).

A central human need purported by Burton, is esteem, which is defined as the need to feel loved and special and of being comprised of self-worth and dignity. Meaning

is another need and is defined as the need to have purpose. The need for meaning or purpose is woven into our identity, which is the third human need discussed. Identity is described as the relational need to be part of a group or the bigger picture. Burton, in his book *Conflict Resolution: Its Language and Processes* (1996), states: “It is identity that provides the means of personal recognition and self-esteem” (p. 30). He doubts existence of harmonious relationships without the means of satisfying the “need for personal identity and recognition” (p. 31).

The need for control is another of Burton’s essential human needs and a precondition for conflict resolution. Control in this context denotes the power of self to be able to determine one’s present and future. The attribute of control is an essential component for esteem and identity. Control is closely related to autonomy, which Burton (1998) describes as “...the right of self-determination and self-government, or freedom to determine one’s actions” (p. 18). Security is another need identified by Burton. Security within one’s surroundings includes both physical and financial. Burton (1998) describes security as, “...the state of being secure, including freedom from poverty, from theft, and from invasion of any kind” (p. 41). Justice pertains to fairness in all aspects of life. Burton contextualizes justice as relating to identity in order to distinguish a culturally apt meaning. Thus he relates justice to “...equality, fairness, and other social conditions. (p. 32). Stimulation as put forth by Burton falls into two categories, which include emotional and rational stimulation. Emotional stimulation is defined as enjoyment and the pursuit or need for pleasure and rational stimulation as learning.

Each of these human needs, esteem, meaning, identity, control, security, justice, and stimulation are pre-conditions for conflict resolution. The state of incarceration can be viewed as essentially nullifying these human needs, relegating inmates to a state of suspended animation with regards to having these essential needs met. Therefore, it is easy to understand the behaviors exhibited within a jail as the pursuit of need attainment, albeit, in deviant and counter-productive manners. Understanding the foundation of human needs theory allows inmates to be viewed through the lens of a system working to achieve the intrinsic goals of homeostasis. Hope theory complements human needs theory and has been incorporated into this study and applied to the ROPES curriculum.

Hope theory. Hope theory does not characterize hope as an emotion but focuses on the cognitive component of hope believing that the emotional aspect will ensue. Authors of *Hope Theory* (2005, p. 257), Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon state, "...hopeful thought reflects the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use those pathways." In addition, the authors believe "...hope, so defined, serves to drive the emotions and well-being of people" (p. 257). They further indicate, "Psychological health is related to people's routine anticipation of their future well-being" (p. 266). Further, they theorize that people with higher levels of hope are likely to have friends with mutual objectives and dispositions. These friends tend to be helpful when obstacles arise.

Goal pursuit is an integral component of hope theory, which begins with the assumption that humans are goal directed. Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2005, p. 258) describe goals as "...the targets of mental action sequences, and they provide the

cognitive component that anchors hope theory.” Goals can be either short or long-term but must be of sufficient value to occupy thoughts. Pathways thinking is an element of goal pursuit and is the process of considering the ways to achieve desired goals and works in conjunction with affirming internal messages. As in human needs theory, agency exists in the form of agentic thinking, which is the ability to use these pathways in a productive and goal-oriented manner. Agentic thinking includes self-referential thoughts about embarking on and making progress toward goal achievement and is particularly useful when barriers are encountered (Snyder, Rand, Sigmon, 2005). Pathways and agentic thinking combine to create an upward spiral in that pathways thinking increases agentic thinking, which, thereby, increases pathway thinking and so on.

Further in the process of this enablement theme is the concept of self-efficacy. Albert Bandura (1977, p. 193) described self-efficacy as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes.” In *Self-Efficacy: The power of believing you can* (2005), James Madux describes self-efficacy as “what I believe I can do with my skills under certain conditions” (p. 278). Shifting maladaptive conflict resolution skills to prosocial skills emanates from the belief that they can produce positive outcomes.

Authors of *Measuring Hope: Is Hope Related to Criminal Behavior in Offenders?* (2010), Krystle Martin and Lana Stermac, maintain, “...psychologists have suggested that hope might be the common factor underlying the majority of psychotherapies that is responsible for producing positive outcomes” (p. 694). They state that the emotion-based

models of hope described hope as a reinforcing emotional state whereas cognitive-based theories purport that hope is used in goal pursuit in the form of thoughts, beliefs, and expectations.

Martin and Stermac (2010) discussed hope within the context of criminality, indicating that it has yet to find a permanent place there. They indicated changes on the horizon with regards to hope predicting future behavior and indicated there is strong evidence showing a correlation between hope and overall well-being, including mental and physical. The authors further conveyed that in studies with sex offenders, elevated levels of hope were associated with greater levels of empathy, enriched intimacy, and fewer feelings of loneliness. In addition, they cited a study of substance abusers indicating that increased levels of hope and self-efficacy were associated with abstaining from substances for longer periods of time. It was also associated with higher quality of life among graduates of substance treatment programs.

The outcome of the research conducted by Martin & Stermac (2010) demonstrated that those with lower levels of hope were at greater risk for being involved in illegal behavior, had scores indicating a higher risk for recidivism, particularly in the presence of lowered agentic thinking. Outcomes also showed that inmates who struggled to believe in their capability to reach goals coupled with low motivation for those goals showed greater risk for recidivism upon release. This finding showed hope as well as agentic thinking as protective factors resulting in less risk and enhancing strengths, supporting positive changes in the future. Conclusions drawn by Martin & Stermac (2010) based on their study provided, “further support for the use of more dynamic risk

factors, such as hope, in the assessment of risk of recidivism, as well as incorporating more hope-focused strategies in the rehabilitation of offenders” (p. 703).

Hope theory is introduced and emphasized in ROPES through the use of Viktor Frankl’s work *Man’s Search for Meaning* (1959). Frankl’s story stimulates reflection on abstract ideals while pondering life’s meaning. Frankl expressed recognition of the ability to choose how we view our existence through self-reflection. Common reactions to Frankl’s existential analysis emphasize the magnitude of his trials as he steadfastly cleaved to hope. Further, Frankl recognized hope as the linchpin to survival during incarceration. Thus, his journey inspires hope by example, despite cogent circumstances. Hope theory contends that without hope, current struggles, including efforts toward education, counseling, and other rehabilitative endeavors, remain sterile and fruitless. Hope theory is a relevant theme for incarcerated who are physically separated from family and friends and often unsure of the length of their sentence. Social construction theory complements and builds on hope theory through its implementation of words and perceptions to create reality.

Social construction theory. Social construction theory is incorporated as an overall theme and used to create the curriculum, class exercises, and assignments. Social constructionism is a strength-based perspective for problem-solving created by David Cooper and Suresh Srivastva, along with other graduate students from Case Western University. It is representative of a postmodern theory with a critical base, which denies classical mega-perspectives and encourages inquiry as opposed to unquestioned acquiescence. As an example, Kenneth Gergen, in his book *An Invitation to Social*

Construction (2009), explains constructionist's challenge of the absolute of scientific knowledge. Constructionists believe that reality is created through words and that multiple realities exist simultaneously (Gergen, 2009).

Another major principle of constructionism is that 'self' or 'identity' is created within relationships. One component of these relationships includes emotions. Gergen (2009) states "emotions are not the private possessions of the individual mind, but are the property of ongoing relationship" (p. 106). Social construction theory provides an idyllic backdrop for concepts utilized in ROPES such as (a) words are energy and contain power; (b) self-talk, such as affirmations and mantras, work to change perceptions; and (c) story-sharing helps reshape our perception and includes expressing emotions. Constructionism is fertile soil for change. Gergen posits, "the moment we begin to speak together, we have the potential to create new ways of being" (p. 29).

Appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry challenges the classical problem-based model by opening doors of opportunity and change through the power of inquiry (Binkert & Clancy, 2011). Underlying this inquisitive approach are concepts such as (a) something works within every group, organization, or society; (b) what we focus on becomes reality; (c) reality or multiple realities are created in the moment; (d) asking questions becomes a form of influence; (e) creating comfort going forward by taking parts of one's past; (f) choosing to take only the best parts when moving forward; (g) valuing differences; and (h) creating reality through language. Other guiding principles include: (a) the positive principle—positive affect and social bonds are needed to create momentum for change, (b) the simultaneity principle—change and inquiry happen at the

same time, (c) the poetic principle—invites individuals to view themselves as a puzzle to be solved or book of possibilities rather than a problem, and (d) the anticipatory principle—humans have endless resources to create constructive changes using imagination and dialogue about the future. (Binkert & Clancy, 2011)

In her article *The narratives of offenders* (2009, p. 184), Lois Presser reiterates that “we live by stories—both in the telling and the doing of self.” She discusses *narrative criminology* as a fledgeling concept in criminology influenced by postmodern criminalists such as Shadd Maruna. His groundbreaking research examining the narrative effects on crime aided in the discovery of common plot devices in the narrative of those capable of desistance. Change in agency contributes toward empowerment in the desistance narrative. Finally, Presser finds that narrative pathways to crime suggests that narrative pathways can also help in the desistance process.

The connection between narrative and agency is expounded in Roman Altshuler’s article *Free will, narrative, and retroactive self-constitution* (2014). Altshuler states, “our self-narration allows us to reason about how to act” (p. 871). He state that “narrative plays the role of guiding agents to act in ways that are meaningful, lending significance to the past” (pp. 871-872). He states that using verbal persuasion we can change the meaning of things within the narrative by changing the narrative.

Sam King (2013) makes a connection between self-narrative and desistance in his article *Early desistance narratives: A qualitative analysis of probationers’ transition towards desistance*. He advocated for instilling identity reconstruction through self-narrative in the initial phase of incarceration as opposed to the latter phase. King

identified the role of narrative in helping to create a new, law-abiding identity. Existing literature supports the usefulness of this narrative-based transformation from offender to non-offender as paramount in the desistance process.

King (2013) discussed the role of narrative in present day society as explained by Anthony Giddens, “under conditions of late modernity individuals must live in a more reflective manner, which can generate new possibilities of thought and action. This suggests individuals are regarded as being responsible for their own destiny, and it is assumed that they have the power to change the conditions in which they live if they choose to do so” (as cited in Greener, 2002, 692-693). King suggested that identity formation in this manner is an ongoing process, which includes continual progress and growth.

King (2013) stated that narratives are important for three reasons: 1) they provide distance from the past and the pain that may be associated with it, 2) they help devise meaning from life events, and 3) they help in the construction of a new, non-offending identity. These narratives draw space for moral reasoning regarding past events. King (2013) cited Giordano et al. (2002) description of agency associated with intentional and reflective actions as a precipitating factor for desistance (see Chapter 1 of this study). Research in narrative criminology encourages professionals in the penal system to create innovative interventions allowing space for agency and self-determination to facilitate the desistance process. Restorative justice is another methodology, which utilizes language to foster change and is incorporated into the ROPES course.

Restorative justice principles. The principles of restorative justice (RJ) propose alternatives to the tradition of retributive justice. Inclusiveness, a central characteristic of restorative justice, seeks to integrate all parties involved in a crime including victims, victim's families, offenders, offender's families, and community members. Core values of restorative justice include respect, care, trust, and humility. Other tenets of RJ state that everyone in a community is affected by crime, individual healing affects community healing, and offender accountability includes admitting one's choice to commit a crime and acknowledging the victim is responsible for neither the crime nor the sentence.

Accountability for crime and the effect crime has on the community is a central theme in Shadd Maruna's article *Who Owns Resettlement? Towards Restorative Re-Integration* (2006). Maruna spoke of "conflicts as property" and the fact that this valuable commodity (conflicts) have been "taken away from their rightful owners (victims, offenders and communities) and given over to lawyers, insurance companies, and the criminal justice system" (2006, p. 3). He goes on to say that we all lose from this misplacement of conflicts, describing three ways in which conflict can be crucial to community development: 1) norm-clarification, 2) pedagogical opportunities, and 3) continuous discussion of what represents the law of the land. Maruna's discussion allows us to consider restorative justice principles and the values they bring, not just to offenders or the criminal justice system, but to society in general. In a reevaluation of our current system it is prudent to ask if these tenets are being utilized effectively.

Howard Zehr is recognized as the grandfather of restorative justice. He described the tenets of restorative justice as "an alternative framework for thinking about

wrongdoing” (Zehr, 2002, p. 5). Using a restorative justice lense, Zehr (2002) defines the three tenets of crime as follows: 1) crime is violation of people and of interpersonal relationships, 2) violations create obligations, and 3) the central obligation is to put right the wrongs. A central concept of restorative justice is that individual behavior has an overall effect on societal members.

In Barb Toews’ book, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice for People in Prison* (2006), she described society as a “web of relationships” (p. 13). She associated RJ principles with human needs theory for a successful social structure when she states: “through strong connections to others, we meet our basic needs for safety, love, self-worth, comfort, and even food and shelter. In a strong web, everyone is equal in worth, has access to power, along with the right to a meaningful life” (p. 13). Toews stated “Family, friends, and others let us down. We do the same to them, intentionally or unintentionally. When left unattended, these broken relationships distort the web, forcing it out of balance” (p. 14). It is these broken relationship within soceity that create chaos and conflict paving the way for resolution and renewed connectedness.

Toews (2006) urged inmates to create a restorative living practice within the jail setting for improved psychological health. Through this practice inmates are encouraged to recognize non-productive behaviors and their impact on those around them. Adopting a restorative living practice allows inmates to replace non-productive behaviors by practicing new, pro-social behaviors such as listening more and talking less, being kind, practicing non-violence, and refraining from gossip. Other behaviors aimed at improving

well-being include meditating, listening to relaxing music, and finding personal inner power and taking control of your life.

Circle Processes. According to Kay Pranis author of *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking* (2005), circle processes, often used in restorative justices contexts, draw from the tradition of talking circles common among indigenous people of North America. Pranis described the shape of the circle as symbolic of shared leadership, focus, connection, and inclusion. Circles are used to come together to connect, solve problems, and support one another. The process promotes focus and accountability and uses specific structural elements, which include a talking piece, guidelines, and shared decision-making. The aim of the circle is to create a space where participants feels safe enough to share their authentic self.

Pranis (2005, p. 6) described the underlying philosophy of the circle, which “acknowledges that we are all in need of help and that helping others helps us at the same time. The participants of the circle benefit from the collective wisdom of everyone in the circle.” Collective wisdom is attained through the values and tenets inherent in the circle process. These values are cultivated through honoring the presence and dignity of each participant, honoring the contribution of each participant, supporting emotional and spiritual expression, and giving an equal voice to each participant.

Circles are used in a variety of settings such as neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, social services, and justice systems. The circle process is a story telling process. Circles value life experiences over advice. Pranis (2005) states “stories unite people in their common humanity and help them appreciate the depth and beauty of the

human experience” (p. 4). One reason Pranis believes stories are so effective is due to the holistic engagement they provide on mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical levels.

In *Heart of Hope (2010)*, Pranis identifies distinct theoretical foundations on which she draws when using circles. The first foundation is emotional intelligence growth. She describes emotional intelligence as a competency essential for a successful life and for finding our way together as a community. The second foundation Pranis (2010) talks about is mindfulness. She exerts that mindfulness, like physical exercise helps us learn from the wisdom of our bodies. The third foundation is the practice of peacemaking circles, which she states offers a simple but profound method of creating deeper, more meaningful relationships. Pranis states “The circle is a process for tapping into the potency of shared values and vision” (p. 9).

Mediation and circle processes are often thought of as restorative justice processes and utilized in the criminal justice system to accomplish a variety of tasks. Kay Pranis described one way circle processes affect offenders in *Peacemaking Circles (1997)*. She states: “The criminal justice system can exercise enormous power over the bodies of offenders, but it is relatively powerless in affecting the minds and hearts of offenders. The behavior change we want from offenders comes primarily from the heart and mind. On the other hand, communities do have significant power to change hearts and minds” (p. 122).

Key Concepts and Related Studies

Correctional Programming Standards

Working in and creating inmate programming is comparable to winding through a maze. With focus, research, and practice one appears to be on the right track when actually they have run into a dead end. Negotiating the corrections system, the prison staff and facilities, and finally, the inmates themselves, requires layers of skills and a variety of tactics. In addition, creating and delivering effective inmate programming requires knowledge, skills, and abilities in conjunction with the latest research and practices known to produce results. In this section I will identify various topics related to inmate programming beginning with effective programming.

Effective Programming. In his article, *Educated Prisoners Are Less Likely to Return to Prison* (2004), James S. Vacca described criteria for effective inmate education. He states “Effective Education Programs are those that help prisoners with their social skills, artistic development and techniques and strategies to help them deal with their emotions” (p. 297). He discussed the implication of effective inmate programming as twofold. First, effective programming should reduce recidivism. Second, it should lead to a better environment within the prison. He indicated that inmates are more prone to attend courses that they know will help them upon reentry into the community.

Interestingly, Vacca (2004) associated the success of inmate programming with the attitudes and values of the prison staff. Not surprisingly, he indicated an inverse relationship between effective programming and both prison overcrowding and

inadequate funding. Many inmates have experienced academic disappointment in their past and need instructors who value their potential, specifically to improve literacy. Vacca states that his findings support the need for “positive prison role models who believe in the value of academic and extracurricular activities that support prisoner’s growth and development” (p. 301).

Evidence-based Practices. Evidence-based practice is a strategy that helps prisons and communities move toward a safer society. According to Ralph C. Serin, author of *Evidence-based Practice: Principles for Enhancing Correctional Results in Prisons* (2005), evidence-based practices (EBP) “is the body of research and replicable clinical knowledge that describes contemporary correctional outcomes such as the rehabilitation of offenders and increased public safety” (p. vii). Authors of *What Works, Wisconsin – Research Practice Series* (2007, p. 1), Cooney, Huser, Small, & O’Connor define evidence-based programs as “Those programs that have been found to be effective based on the results of rigorous evaluations.” Cooney et al. (2007) delineate between “evidence-based” programming and “research-based” programming. Evidence-based programs have endured years of scientific research and have shown to be effective. In contrast, research-based programming may contain content guided by research but lacking in rigorous scientific research to decipher effectiveness.

Serin identifies the primary goals of prison administrators as operating safe prisons and preparing inmates for reentry. He goes on to state that “failure to provide correctional programming (EBP) in prisons due to financial constraints is a flawed argument in light of evidence of effectiveness and overall cost-savings” (Serin, 2005, p.

4). Contrary to staunch retributionists, correctional programming is not soft on criminals and should focus on accountability and prosocial skills. The amalgamation of these goals place prison staff at the heart of meeting correction's educational goals. Society's interest in effective programming includes reduction in future victims and criminal justice cost-savings. Other correctional benefits outlined by Serin (2005, p. 16) include "reduced misconducts, reduced escapes, increased rates of inmates placed at lower security without incident, increased participation in programming, improved community re-entry and transition, and increased rates of release success."

So What Works? "Evidence-based practices" has become the buzz-phrase for corrections recently. The obvious question is: "what are evidence-based practices?" and in the same vein, "what works?" In her article, *Evidence-Based Corrections: Identifying What Works* (2000), Doris Layton MacKenzie took on these questions. Her analysis of effective corrections practices included meta-analyses of several programs. Her findings include a variety of complexities within corrections programming such as incorporating structure and focus in the course, using multiple treatment modalities, skill development, and behavioral methods. Interestingly, she, like Serin, regards the relationship between instructor and participant essential to effective programming, which also coincided with positive criminology premises and practices.

Layton MacKenzie (2000) identified two different types of cognitive behavioral programs, which include reasoning and rehabilitation and moral recognition therapy. She states that both programs focus on changing participant's thoughts and attitudes and both are effective at reducing recidivism. She goes on to list programming that is not effective.

These include programs that emphasize specific deterrence such as shock probation or scared straight. Programs that are nondirective, vague, or unstructured counseling are not effective. In addition, increased control and surveillance in the community, wilderness programs, and boot-camps are not effective.

In *Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs* (2008), Layton MacKenzie describes cognitive skills programs as those that focus on changes in thought processes such as thinking errors, problem solving, coping skills, and antisocial attitudes and impulsivity. Cognitive skills programming makes sense as the way in which a person thinks influences whether or not they will violate the law. In addition, cognitive skills deficiencies effects self-efficacy, which is found to be associated with crime. Other crime-related factors that can be changed through education include executive cognitive functioning, moral development, and the pains of imprisonment. Increased social skills are associated with higher employability. Layton MacKenzie (2008) states that programs that are skill-oriented, cognitive-behavioral, and multimodal are more effective.

Effective programs target criminogenic needs, which are elements of the participant's assessment that are dynamic. Examples of criminogenic needs include antisocial attitudes and associates, a history of antisocial behavior, antisocial personality patterns, problematic home life, school situation, or work situation. Problematic leisure time and substance abuse are also considered criminogenic needs. Layton MacKenzie emphasizes the point made earlier that vocational opportunities and job skills won't help transition to the outside until cognitive transformation has first taken place.

The role of providers and peripheral staff. Serin (2005) notes that staff are a critical resource in evidence-based practice implementation. Displaying good communication skills, setting appropriate limits, and employing empathy contribute to program retention and are important components of effective interventions. Serin (2005) notes that, as in positive criminology, staff that effectually model prosocial attitudes and skills and reinforce incremental gains by inmates will contribute toward the inmate's change process. Serin (2005) goes on to say that "Trained and empathic staff are the cornerstone to effective corrections. Since many staff have extraordinary skills and experience, successful methods must reflect expertise from the ground up as well as the top down. Punitive and confrontational strategies, however, have proved ineffective" (p. 16). Finally, Maruna points to the providers and staff working with corrections clients as being crucial to the process for forming normal relationships. This theme is supported by positive criminology, restorative justice, and criminologists included in this section such as Shadd Maruna (2015), Natalie Hearn (2010), Ronel and Elisha (2010), Ralph C. Serin (2005), and James S. Vacca (2004).

Evidence-based practices versus Desistance Research (Quantitative versus Qualitative). The current qualitative study is designed to contribute toward criminological research on effective programming. The case for quantitative versus qualitative research is an ongoing topic of discussion in the social science field. Social science research, in general, has subscribed to the medical model as the normative standard for assessing program outcomes. Some theorists believe this goes back to the institution of the medical model in the social sciences to compete for funding (Halling &

Nil, 1995). However, a qualitative research movement has taken hold and is building momentum. Shadd Maruna, a prominent criminologist, deconstructs the discussion in his article, *Qualitative Research, Theory Development, and Evidence-Based Corrections: Can Success Stories Be “Evidence”?* (2015).

Maruna (2015) began his discussion with the fundamental question asking “What counts as evidence-based within actual practice?” In a comparison of evidence-based practices and desistance, Maruna notes that these, seemingly, divergent themes fit together, albeit awkwardly. He stated that “what works” typically involves randomized controlled trials for program evaluations. Whereas, desistance research focuses on the lived journeys of individuals who have stopped committing crimes and often extend over a period of time. These self-narratives are central to qualitative research. Maruna notes that both practices utilize a reduction in recidivism as the dependent variable. He further notes that both practices extend the belief that people can change over time. Maruna’s point coincides with Halling & Nil’s (1995) dissection of the quantitative process over time. Quantitative analysis is as essential to good science as self-narrative is to human transformation. Therefore, to understand the transformation process we must include the deconstruction of self-narrative in research.

Maruna (2015, p. 317) stated “Critics of the ‘what works’ paradigm argue that this ‘institutionalized quantitivism’ (Booth 2001) is ‘brutishly destructive of some of the most important aspects of research and scholarship’ (MacLure 2005).” Maruna cites authors Holmes, Murray, Perron & Rail, in their article on the quantitative-laden research field, *Deconstructing the Evidence-Based Discourse in Health Sciences: Truth, Power*

and Fascism (2006, p. 317) as stating “The evidence-based movement...is outrageously exclusionary and dangerously normative with regards to scientific knowledge.” A fact central to Maruna’s argument is the possibility of bias toward institutional programs owing to the fact that holistic programs are more difficult to evaluate. In addition, he stated the medical model centralizes programming as the means for change as opposed to centralizing the participant as the means for change.

Innovative Criminological Paradigms

Desistance theory. Desistance theory is a body of research associated with narrative criminology that seeks to understand the narrative of offenders who have chosen to refrain from committing further crimes. Maruna (2015, p. 322) states “Rather than asking what ‘works’, qualitative and mixed-methods research on desistance typically asks how individuals with criminal backgrounds are able to construct new, prosocial identities for themselves.” This approach allows researchers to discern individual agency in the process of desistance, which holds the possibility of revolutionizing the ontological process of rehabilitation. Maruna (2015, p. 324) cited the history of addiction recovery as an example, stating “Treatment was birthed as an adjunct to recovery, but, as treatment grew in size and status, it defined recovery as an adjunct of itself.”

This theoretical model can and has been applied to criminology. Desistance advocates seek to give rehabilitation back to those navigating the desistance process. This model, according to Maruna, has been alternatively known as self-change, empowerment, strength-based, relational approach, and desistance-focused practice. It views program

providers more as a support for the desister than as a provider of treatment and creates space for the inmates to guide the practitioner (Maruna, 2015).

Desistance literature corresponds with agency as described by Ray Paternoster and Shawn Bushway in *Desistance and the Feared Self: Toward an Identity Theory of Criminal Desistance* (2009, p. 1105), “Human agency, we believe, is expressed through this act of intentional self-change.” They describe intentional self-change as “understood to be more cognitive, internal, and individual, at least initially with new social networks” (p. 1106). This willful identity transformation is described as a slow and gradual process occurring over time.

One controversial reason desistance themes may not be particularly popular in criminology is because it places the responsibility for desistance squarely on the actor. However, it would be negligent to negate contributing factors toward desistance, including inmate programming. Giordano et al., (2002) discussed elements of programming such as the learning environment as one catalyst making change possible. Prosocial modeling and building bonds between provider and practitioner is another catalyst for change as noted by several theorists such as Shadd Maruna (2015), Natalie Hearn (2010), Ronel and Elisha (2010), Ralph C. Serin (2005), and James S. Vacca (2004). It is not easily discernable what causes a person to affect internal transformation, however, it is prudent to remain open to the idea that several variables contribute toward this process.

The ROPES course is a small, independent, theoretically-based program which adheres to the tradition outlined by Maruna and others who support qualitative,

quantitative, and mixed-methods research. According to the standards laid out above, it is not evidence-based, however, it is rich in research-based information. Narrative design is central to ROPES and included in the curriculum. Research-based information incorporated into the course includes multimodal design, cognitive-behavioral skills, skill development, and behavioral methods. Another element of effective programming addressed in ROPES through the implementation of positive criminology is the positive relationship between treatment personnel and participant. ROPES also incorporates several components that are research based including mindfulness meditation (Dobkins, 2008; Himmelstein, 2011; Pepping, O'Donovan & Davis, 2013; Michalak, Teismann, Heidenreich, Strohl & Vocks, 2011; Schutte and Malouff, 2011; Rasmussen and Pidgeon, 2011; Weinstein, Brown & Ryan, 2009; Arch and Craske, 2006; Jewell and Elliff, 2013), gratitude (Baker, 2003; Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Watkins, Woodruff, Stone & Kolts, 2003; Post, 2005; Harbaugh and Vasey, 2014; Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2007; Watkins, Grimm & Kolts, 2004), forgiveness (Luskin, 2002; vanOyen Witvliet, Knoll, Hinman & DeYoung, 2010; vanOyen, Ludwig & Vander Laan, 2001), emotional intelligence (Vacca, 2004; Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002; Van Harreveld, Van der Pligt, Claassen and Van Dijk, 2007; Bar-On, 2012; Casarjian, Philips & Wolman, 2007; Hansenne, 2012; Wing, Schutte, & Byrne, 2006), narrative-design (King, 2013; Pennebaker and Seagal, 1999; Presser, 2009; Altshuler, 2014), and empathy (Saarni, 1999; Wilmot and Hocker, 2011; Bolton, 1979; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 2011; Weeks, 1992; Welp and Brown, 2013).

Agency and self-determination. The ROPES curriculum incorporates perspectives of agency and self-determination prominent in this literature review and common in restorative justice mediation practices. Agentic thinking is described by Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2005) as “the perceived capacity to use one’s pathways so as to reach desired goals” (p. 258). In their article, *Using Self-Determination Theory in Correctional Education Development* (2011, p. 188), authors Dani McKinney, Ph.D and Michael A. Cotronea describe the use of self-determinate theory within the context of inmate education and its effects on survey outcomes. They state “Research using self-determination theory indicates that when students in a course feel a level of competence, autonomy and relatedness, their ratings of the course (and the instructor) are higher” (2011, p. 188). The authors attribute these outcomes to the participant’s ability to finish the course, the option of choice in education, and rapport between the participant and the instructor. For the purposes of the ROPES course, the concept of self-determination refers to the party’s ability to choose to participate in programming initially and then choose aspects of the curriculum they wish to employ. Implications of agency and self-determination generate the idea of ‘choice’ and the ability to choose direction, which leads to greater ownership and investment regardless of outcomes.

Perceptions, emotions, and emotional intelligence. Perceptions include past experiences, which, collectively make up how one views the world. According to Pruitt and Kim (2004), a perception is “a belief about, or way of viewing, some person or object” (p. 106). Perceptions about an individual drive how one interacts with that individual. Attitudes supplement perceptions and are described by Pruitt and Kim (2004)

as either a positive or negative assessment or feeling toward a person or object.

Therefore, if perceptions and attitudes about a person or situation can be augmented or changed, the possibility for resolution increases. The ROPES course teaches participants to examine perceptions about self and others in an effort to determine their validity. Pruitt and Kim (2004) state “Some psychological changes involve emotions or emotionally related perceptions” (p. 102). Perceptions are precursors to emotions.

Emotions and their resulting behaviors are at the heart of the ROPES training. ROPES was founded on the premise that if we can learn to process emotions in a productive manner, proficiency at conflict resolution will ensue. Pruitt and Kim (2004, p. 102) believe “Emotions can have a powerful effect on behavior.” The authors asserted that emotions feed the ability to ignore caution, resulting in highly escalated behavior. Unfortunately, the theme of emotions in conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation is often averted by both practitioner and participants alike. In her article *Mindfulness, Emotions, and Ethics: The right stuff?* (2010), Ellen Waldman considers the role of emotions in the practice of alternative dispute resolution. She states “In the mediation world, scholars and practitioners frequently treat emotions as the unruly step-child of the problem-solving mind” (p. 514). She continues “For these reasons, leading mediation theorists present emotion as a force to be blunted, manipulated, or leveraged in the service of “getting to yes” (p. 514).

The study of emotions in the area of dispute resolution is often similar to Waldman’s depiction. The need for exploration of emotional intelligence in the field of conflict should symbolize a realm of curiosity rather than a conundrum with few didactic

opportunities and fewer cogent examples. Educational opportunities for processing emotions and employing emotional intelligence are emerging in academia and have cropped up in main stream society, particularly in the business sector, but have yet to find secure footing in our mainstream culture. As I began to study emotional intelligence in the business sector several years ago while employed at juvenile court, I considered how this model might be adapted to work with corrections clients. Thus began a journey that continues to this day.

Emotional intelligence concepts are relatively new. In the 1980's Reuven Bar-On used the abbreviation EI for the first time referring to emotional intelligence abilities. Peter Salovey and John Mayer published their concepts of emotional intelligence in 1990. In the forward in *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence* (Bar-On and Parker, 2000), Daniel Goleman describes the progression of emotional intelligence as “remarkably rapid.” In his own book, *Emotional Intelligence*, published in 1995, he ushered emotional intelligence concepts to the main stage of the general public. By the end of the 1990's emotional intelligence was the new buzz word and the focus of many books and articles

Emotional competence is defined by Carolyn Saarni in chapter four of *The Handbook of Emotional intelligence* (2000), as “the demonstration of self-efficacy in emotion-eliciting social transactions” (p. 68). Teaching inmates to recognize personal emotional patterns, including strengths and weaknesses, offers an opportunity to reflect rather than react, creating the possibility for better outcomes. Emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy are woven throughout the ROPES curriculum with a plethora of skills branching from this core. Narrative design

including self-narrative, story-telling and emotional expression are strategic elements of ROPES and ties in with social constructionism as discussed above.

Strength-based perspectives. A core themes for ROPES begin with a strength-based perspective. An article by Maruna and LeBel (2003) *Welcome Home? Examining the "Reentry Court" Concepts from a Strengths-based Perspective* depicts alternative practices, which have shown promise regarding themes of inmate reentry as it applies to the traditional stick and carrot paradigm. The article reviews multiple criminogenic theses, including: (a) the focus on reducing further crime rather than enhancing inmate wellbeing, (b) shaping positive behaviors in addition to extinguishing poor behaviors, (c) identifying positive contributions an inmate can make in society (social exchange), (d) de-labeling processes and, (e) the wounded healer perspective. Another anti-pathological approaches used in the ROPES curriculum includes positive criminology.

An innovative correctional paradigm. In his 2002 presidential address to the American Society of Criminology, Lawrence Sherman acknowledged that the punitive approach to criminal justice has failed us and called for the development of a new, more holistic approach to criminal justice. His call for the invention of an emotionally intelligent justice system includes various practices and paradigms, among them restorative justice; concepts of positive criminology or how justice officials speak to suspects, defendants, and offenders; motivational interviewing; and creating an emotionally intelligent system by becoming aware of the system's emotions, recognizing emotions in victims and offenders, and managing emotions well (Sherman, 2003).

Positive criminology. Choosing a holistic framework for the ROPES program created a unique challenge specifically in locating research to support alternatives to the traditional stick and carrot paradigm. However, upon reading an article on positive criminology the paradigm problem was resolved. Positive criminology is a budding criminological perspective originated by criminal justice professor, Natti Ronel at Israel's Bar-Ilan University. Ronel and his cohort, Dana Segev, describe the objective of positive criminology "Comparably to positive psychology, research and theory in positive criminology focuses on positive emotions, experiences and mechanisms that increase individuals' well-being and reduce their negative emotions, behaviors and attitudes" (2015, p. 4). This practice includes a variety of theories, perceptions, models and assumptions about moral, social and law-enforcement responses to criminal behavior encouraging the transformation of individuals and groups (Ronel & Segev, 2015).

Ronel and Segev describe the paradigm:

Positive psychology and positive criminology have shifted away from the notion of conceiving of an individual as containing a set of problems that "need to be fixed." Rather, they promote a more holistic view, which acknowledges that thriving and disengagement from distress, addiction, mental illness, crime, or deviance might be fostered more effectively by enhancing positive emotions and experiences, rather than focusing on reducing negative attributes (Ronel and Segev, 2013, p. 2).

Some positive components included in this paradigm are acceptance, compassion, encouragement, faith, forgiveness, goodness, gratitude, humor, positive modeling, and

spirituality. These forces contribute toward positive change and generate reduction in negative emotions. Strength-based theories and developments are incorporated to emphasize and support perspectives and reduce stigmatizing offenders (Ronel & Segev, 2015). Basically, this theoretical groundwork purports that the healing effect of positive experiences and social inclusion prove to be as strong as negative experiences (Ronel and Segev, 2013). An expectation within positive criminology allows the possibility for offenders to develop positive qualities and turn their lives around.

Positive criminology includes limiting criminal behavior through encounters that are positive, integrative, and help offenders both resist and desist from engaging in criminal activity (Ronel & Segev, 2015; Ronel & Elisha, 2011). As stated succinctly by Ronel and Segev (2013, p. 5) “by the very enhancing of the positive, one can reduce the negative.” This shift includes discarding the problem-and-treatment-only perspectives and adopting a more comprehensive paradigm where recovery is a gradual process and is accomplished through the development of physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational health with relapse as a part of the process. Participants are encouraged to replace negative behaviors with positive ones. An example used in the ROPES course is the reframing of negative self-narratives to normative or positive self-narratives. A primary difference between positive criminology and other criminological paradigms is the focus on limiting crime by placing an emphasis on unifying and integrating themes not only on individual, group, and social levels but on the spiritual level as well.

A principal goal of positive criminology is to strengthen relationships between offenders and normative members of society. Using this practice, providers exhibit

prosocial behaviors such as reliability, honesty, respect for others, active listening, optimism, solution-focused intent, warmth, empathy, and seek out strengths and positive motives of others. Moving away from institutional perspectives to focus on participants provides an example of pro-social modeling, which lays stepping stones for building healthy relationships. In addition, the practice provides a foundation for human strengths such as resilience, faith, and courage that can promote hope and self-efficacy and initiate an upward spiral. According to Ronel and Segev (2013) self-efficacy, hope, and optimism for the future are fundamental components of desistance.

Positive criminology provides the foundation for working with ROPES participants. Using this criminological perspective provides guidelines and philosophical mooring to help negotiate the triumphs and frustrations of working with a complicated demographic and the political structure associated with it. Exhibiting prosocial behaviors such as reliability, honesty, respect for others, active listening, optimism, solution-focused intent, warmth, empathy, and noting the strengths and positive motives of others helps to shape the ROPES course. Applying a strength-based focus allows participants to transcend bars and stripes if even for a limited amount of time.

Ronel (2015) suggests positive criminology doesn't just discuss the "what is" in criminology (or 'what works') but goes further to discuss 'what ought to be', which helps frame the question regarding the type of society we aspire to create. Positive criminology represents a handful of theoretical perspectives that infuse constructive ideology in the criminological field. Concepts that fall within this paradigm include those from

restorative justices, therapeutice jurisprudence, procedural justice, emotional intelligence, and desistance research.

A Review of Inmate Education Focusing on Social Skills

This review of prison programs aimed at building social skills among inmates provides a glimpse of life skill courses in the United States. A course based in Hawaii called, “Restorative Justice as a Solution-focused Approach to Conflict and Wrongdoing,” will be discussed last and was the most comparable program to the ROPES course due to the fact that the Hawaii program creator, Loren Walker, willingly and patiently provided advice and recommendations to enhance the ROPES course. Although this review of social skills courses offered to inmates is not a comprehensive representation, research on inmate social skill courses, coupled with national recidivism rates, demonstrate the need for additional programming to meet the complex needs of a burgeoning inmate population.

Houses of Healing. Houses of Healing inmate program is based on a book written by Robin Casarjian is implemented in participating prisons throughout the U.S. The program has an emotional literacy base and incorporates themes of masculinity and life skills for men’s groups (Casargian, Phillips, & Wolman, 2007) and themes of holistic healing, grief processing, self-esteem, and life skills for women’s groups (Ferszt, Salgado, DeFedele, & Leveillee, 2008). Participants reported improved psychological well-being, along with increased self-esteem, hopefulness, emotional regulation, and ability to use positive coping skills to deal with stress (Ferszt et al., 2008). The Houses of Healing program is rich in emotional literacy. The program focuses on participants past

issues as a catalyst for moving forward. This program shows merit in using an emotional literacy design and looking to the past to heal the present and future.

Vipassana. Another prison program was implemented at Hermon medium security rehabilitation prison in Israel in 2006 focused on Vipassana. Vipassana, an ancient meditation technique originating in India, is associated with the teachings of Buddha. The three focuses of Vipassana are *morality*, *mindfulness*, and *experiential wisdom* derived from self-observation. The training lasted ten and a half days and included separating participants from the general population, following a vegetarian diet throughout the duration of the training, abstaining from lying, stealing, or sex for the duration of the training, and maintaining full silence. The training was open to all prisoners on a voluntary basis. All day teachings began as early as 4 a.m. and ended at 9 p.m. (Ronel, Frid, & Timor, 2013). The training was grounded heavily in positive criminology themes of social inclusion, positive emotions, exploring individual strengths rather than controlling faults, and included future, desistance-oriented as opposed to past or problem-oriented components (Ronel, Frid, & Timor, 2013). A phenomenological study ensued which revealed results including themes of perceived goodness (having to do with the Vipassana staff having volunteered their time to teach the course), positive relations with prison staff (related to interacting with prison staff as equals during the training,), positive social atmosphere, and overcoming an ordeal (in this case, delayed gratification after sacrificing daily comforts to successfully complete the program). Many participants attempted to replicate portions of the program upon reentry to the general population.

The Vipassana course has several positive attributes for the promotion of inmate well-being including its theoretical foundation of positive criminology. Themes of instructor or staff relations with inmates are recurring inmate themes as demonstrated in the current study. The program is presumed to have a cumulative positive impact on social, individual, and spiritual factors. Meditation is proven to be beneficial for stress reduction (Dobkin, 2008; Himelstein, 2011), and can be enhanced when used in combination with other social skills focusing on interpersonal interactions.

Thinking for a change. Thinking for a change is a cognitive-behavioral based program created through the National Institute of Corrections and implemented in prisons throughout the U.S. The course is comprised of twenty-two, two-hour classes emphasizing various social skills such as listening, asking appropriate questions, and thinking errors (Lowenkamp, Hubbard, Makarios, & Latessa, 2009). Assignments to be completed out of class (cell-assignments) are included in each lesson. Participants are ordered to attend by the court or their probation officer. The results of the study show lower recidivism rates for program participants compared to control group participants. The curriculum for Thinking for a change is available on-line to any facility willing to use it. It can be taught by corrections or other staff. However, the availability of the course leaves the door open to water down the curriculum. In addition, in the absence of offering a full curriculum, who picks the lessons? Who decides which should be taught and which should be left out, and why? The outcome study was conducted on the 22-session curriculum. How are program outcomes affected when the curriculum is modified?

Prison of Peace. Prison of Peace is a prisoner facilitated mediation program initialized at Valley State Prison for Women in California in 2010. The program was birthed at the behest of inmates frustrated by the violent and conflict-ridden prison environment. Program creators Laurel Kaufer and Doug Noll started a program which utilizes prisoner facilitated mediation to help resolve peer conflicts. The uniqueness of using inmates as third party facilitators is effective in two impactful ways: 1) inmates are often distrustful of authority, and 2) inmates understand the prison culture and values which helps in formulating a workable solution (Kaufer, Noll, & Mayer, 2014).

Inmates chosen to be mediators are taught communication skills and techniques such as reflecting back and how to reframe issues. Training provided to the inmate-trainees helps not only those embroiled in conflict but the inmate-trainee themselves by building self-confidence and self-efficacy. Inmates are trained in empathy which helps facilitate the mediation process and helps build healthier personal relationships. In addition, inmates are trained in restorative justice concepts and peace circles.

Authors of *Prisoner Facilitated Mediation: Bringing peace to prisons and communities*, Kaufer, Noll, and Mayer (2014) also posit that prison facilitated mediation assists inmates using the skills learned in training to get more out of other rehabilitative programs. This is achieved by reducing violence which creates a better learning environment and by having attained skills which transfer to situations other than mediation and conflict resolution.

Limitations included attempting to facilitate mediation with mentally ill inmates, start-up costs of the program, and time investment. In order to launch prisoner facilitated

mediation the Prison of Peace staff need the support of both the inmates and the prison administration. In addition, start-up costs ranging from \$300,000 to \$750,000 for the first twenty-four months have been assumed by the Prison of Peace program, thus far.

Another issue restricting expansion of the program is the ability to locate professional, trained mediators capable of working in a prison environment.

Prison of Peace has correlates with ROPES in several areas. ROPES participants are taught conflict resolution skills such as active listening, reflecting, and empathy. In addition, neuroscience is incorporated in both programs. Both programs teach and demonstrate restorative justice and peacemaking circles and both equip participants with skills that translate interpersonally and both inside the prison and upon release. Prison of Peace appears to be a strong, start-up program aimed at helping inmates begin to help themselves and break the cycle of conflict and incarceration.

Restorative justice as a solution-focused approach to conflict and wrongdoing. An inmate education program based in Hawaii was used as a model for portions of the ROPES curriculum. The program called “Restorative Justice as a Solution-focused Approach to Conflict and Wrongdoing” was featured in an article entitled *A Gift of Listening for Hawaii’s Inmates* (Walker & Sakai, 2006) in *Corrections Today* and reiterated the importance of restorative justice in corrections. The Hawaii program uses concepts of the restorative justice circle processes to develop emotional expressiveness through narrative, thereby, enhancing self-awareness. Lorenn Walker with the Hawaii program offered her expertise during the transition from Girls Group to the development of ROPES for adult inmates. She suggested using *Forgive for Good* (2002)

by Dr. Fred Luskin to teach inmates about letting go of resentment and offense and providing applications for dealing with hurt and resentment. She also suggested using *Man's Search for Meaning* to discuss developing resilience and fostering hope (Viktor Frankl, 1959). The Hawaii program is saturated in positive criminology themes such as solution-focused and strength-based teaching. Outcomes were measured using a qualitative survey of sixteen inmates who had participated in the program and showed a positive effect on participants. Administrators also tracked recidivism rates for a limited time and found positive outcomes in the form of low recidivism rates.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter five theoretical frameworks that have been incorporated in the ROPES course are discussed. The frameworks work in conjunction with one another and often contain overlapping elements all serving to weave a robust foundation and curriculum. Key concepts reviewed in this chapter include literature related to correctional programming, which includes descriptions of effective programming, evidence-based practices, and the role providers and jail staff play in programming. Evidence-based practices are contrasted to desistance research showing the importance of qualitative research as well quantitative research.

Other themes touched on include perceptions, emotions, and emotional intelligence. Strength-based paradigms are reviewed and include positive criminology and desistance. It is rare to discuss ideas on desistance without discussing agency as well and this literature review is no exception. The chapter concludes with an overview of courses that teach social skills and outcomes associated with those courses.

This literature review links together several concepts used in ROPES. The literature, once saturated with quantitative analyses in penal studies is beginning to show room for other exploration processes. This review makes the case for utilizing more qualitative research. Chapter Three provides an in-depth description of the qualitative process in penal studies.

Chapter 3: Research Method

“We may be incarcerated, but we are still human beings, longing for acceptance, attention, and love. A simple facial gesture, such as a smile, can truly make a prisoner’s day. Judge us not for the mistakes we made, but give light and hope so that one day we may become productive individuals in society.” Mark T. Pieczynsk (as cited in Lagana & Lagana, 2009, p. 87)

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe participant’s perceptions of the ROPES course in an effort to add to the body of research defining effective inmate programming. This chapter reviews the research design and the rationale for using it, followed by a discussion of the researcher’s role. The methodology utilized in this study is outlined including participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Data analysis and ethical procedures round out the chapter followed by a summary. The central research question for this study is “What effect does holistic conflict resolution training have on inmate self-efficacy?” In that the dilemma of incarceration and rehabilitation is an on-going quandary, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the effects of a ten session holistic conflict resolution course on inmate self-efficacy adding to research.

Phenomenology, which uses narrative data to understand the essence of a phenomenon is the guiding methodology in this qualitative research design. There are several phenomenological genres from which to choose. This study incorporates transcendental phenomenology. Other names for transcendental phenomenology are

descriptive phenomenology, empirical phenomenology, psychological phenomenology, and constitutive phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology is descriptive and aims to seek the essence of the subject or phenomenon being studied (Lavery, 2003). Data analysis seeks to describe, using the participant's own words, what they experienced and how they experienced it.

In *Phenomenological Research Methods* (1994), Clark Moustakas defines one of the core facets of this human science research design. He states "In phenomenological investigation the researcher has a personal interest in whatever she or he seeks to know; the researcher is intimately connected with the phenomenon" (p. 59). In his statement, Moustakas captures the passion associated with creating a holistic program and designing a study to assess efficacy. The in-depth deconstruction of lived experiences is an ideal approach for understanding the effects of ROPES.

Moustakas (1994) explains that transcendental means moving beyond the mundane to pure ego where everything is perceived freshly as if never having been experienced before. The theorist who founded transcendental phenomenology, Edmond Husserl (1859-1938), was a German philosopher and mathematician. He posited that consciousness was a condition of all human experience (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). According to Dr. Susann M. Lavery, in her article *Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations* (2003), she calls Husserl's description of psychology a "science that had gone wrong by attempting to apply methods of the natural sciences to human issues" (p. 4). Husserl is noted for having stated that these pursuits ignored the fact that psychology deals with

humans who react to their perceptions of things and not just stimuli. Therefore, his key initiative was to focus on the study of phenomena as it appeared through consciousness (Lavery, 2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology was founded by Husserl's successor, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Whereas Husserl believed context was of peripheral importance, Heidegger believed it to be central.

Careful consideration of other qualitative research approaches allowed for their methodical elimination, culminating in identification of the methodology best suited to this study. The case study design posed a viable option as it focuses on a specific event or program, however, it also utilizes multiple sources for data. Because the ROPES course is new interviews are important and pose the best means for gathering information.

Grounded theory was also considered for this study. Grounded theory aims to generate a discovery or a theory through its design. Grounded theory may be a great subsequent step following phenomenology, which, in my view is the first, basic step in getting deep, textural impressions of the course. Narrative research aims to tell a story and includes personal experiences encased within a rich story. Although, narrative research appeals to my creative side, it does not fit the objective needed for ROPES at this time. Finally, ethnographic research did not fit the goals of this study as it focuses on shared cultures, describing their interpretations and patterns.

Phenomenology compliments this study for several reasons, 1) phenomenology is fashioned for researchers who are intimately connected to their work and choose to maintain immediacy; 2) phenomenology adheres to narrative design, coinciding with major themes within the course and the study; 3) phenomenology creates space for the

participants to exercise empowerment by providing feedback on what works for them, again, emphasizing major themes within the course itself such as themes of meaning, justice, esteem and stimulation as found in human needs theory and themes of self-awareness, self-regulation, and assertiveness as found in emotional intelligence concepts; 4) phenomenology works well with tenets of social construction theory, which advocates for creating reality by coming together, in this case, towards the refinement of the program; 5) phenomenology as applied to this study coincides with restorative justice principles including the active inclusion of offenders in the justice process as well as their contribution toward non-violent solutions; and 6) autonomy and self-determination, factors foundational to the course, are also foundational for participants in a phenomenological study.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the primary investigator (PI), Chris Wilson, in the training and data collection portion of the research is that of observer-participant. This includes being involved with the participants throughout training and overseeing interviews conducted by a research assistant. As such, I have conducted ten sessions of training with the participants prior to inviting them to participate in the research study. Due to the nature and dynamics of incarceration it is highly unlikely I would encounter the participants once the course has concluded. Contact is limited to chance encounters in the jail halls and does not include written correspondence, phone conversations, visits, or exchanges of personal information. Power dynamics may include perceived dynamics inherent in instructor-participant relationships.

Methods employed to mitigate researcher bias and power imbalances include a triangulated effort with the facility's program coordinator to deliver inmate invitations to participate in the research study in order to create distance and neutrality. Before the informed consent meetings occurred the research assistant was counseled regarding pressuring participants to participate in the study. The research assistant was present during the informed consent meetings and acted as an informed accountability partner for the primary researcher. This technique achieves two principle objectives, 1) accountability to ensure participants were not pressured into participation, and 2) introduction of the research assistant to perspective study participants.

Methodology

Participants for this study included thirteen county and state, male and female inmates incarcerated in a Utah jail who are held in the general population and have previously graduated from the ROPES course. The sampling strategy that best describes this study is convenience case sampling. Convenience case is used by a researcher to access a centrally located group of people. Convenience case sampling strategy, according to Creswell (2007), sacrifices credibility for the sake of convenience. It is true that inmates are centrally located making convenience case sampling a necessity. However, Creswell's definition of convenience case is based, in part, on easy accessibility, which is not the case with inmates.

Inmates who maintained a qualifying behavior level are allowed to attend education courses, therefore, study participants included inmates considered to be in good standing with facility staff. ROPES course participants were also chosen based on their

availability (related to participation in other classes or programs that overlap with ROPES or work assignments) on a voluntary, first-come, first-serve basis. The primary investigator had no involvement in the selection of ROPES participants which was conducted by the facility program coordinator.

Participants for the study were selected from rosters of past ROPES course graduates. Criminal charges were not taken into consideration and remained unknown to the researcher to prevent bias. Participants must speak English. Inmates of all ethnic and religious backgrounds as well as all academic levels were included. All participants were age eighteen and over as required for incarceration in this facility. Participants who completed ROPES and were still incarcerated at the jail in general population at the time of the study were invited to participate. Federal inmates who participated in and graduated from the ROPES course were not invited to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

Interviews were conducted by a research assistant using a questionnaire consisting of eight open-ended, provocative questions. The semi-structured interviews consisted of four demographic questions, the central research question regarding perceptions of conflict resolution following the ROPES course, and seven additional probing questions. All interviews were audio-taped.

The interview questions were produced by the researcher and targeted demographic information and perceptions of the course. Demographic information probed the topics of gender, holding agency, age of first incarceration, and information regarding high school graduation. Research does not correlate graduation from traditional

high school with criminal activity, however, studies show that a large percent of the inmate population do not possess a high school diploma from a traditional high school. In addition, high school is a crucial time of social skill development, therefore, inmates incarcerated at earlier ages are more likely to suffer from a greater lack in social skills according to Arum and Beattie (1999).

Succeeding the four demographic questions, the initial interview question probed for perceptions of conflict resolution following the ROPES course. Participants were asked if they believed their ability to deal with conflict changed following the ROPES course and, if so, how? Participants were prompted to provide examples. This question targeted self-efficacy in conflict resolution. Next, participants were asked if they made any changes as a result of participating in the course. They were subsequently asked to describe those changes. This question probed for elements of change. Next, participants were asked to identify what stood out to them about the training and why. This question probed for specific training components that remained notable to participants.

The following question explored whether or not the course helped participants during their incarceration, seeking to understand whether or not ROPES delivers immediate applicability. Participants were asked to share examples. Participants were then asked if any components of ROPES will be helpful upon reentry to the community and why it will be helpful. This question seeks to explore the potential for transferability of training concepts from incarceration to life on the outside. It may also serve to delineate components perceived as suitable for application upon reentry but not applicable while incarcerated. Participants were then asked what changes they would

make to refine the ROPES course. This question focuses on program refinement as well as autonomy and self-determination as former participants. The final question prompts participants to share anything that may have been omitted and was used as a general wrap-up question. These questions are exhaustive and intended to cover the scope of perceptions on the ROPES course delivery and practicality, comprising both specific and general topics.

Instrumentation Development

Irving Seidman, author of *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (2013), identifies four themes in phenomenological research. The first theme is the temporal and transitory nature of the human experience. The phenomenological interviewer focuses on the experience of the subject and the meaning taken away from that experience. The second theme includes subjective understanding of the experience. This theme calls for probing and interpreting the subject's experience. The third theme encapsulates phenomenology as an approach that focuses on lived experiences of humans and the final theme emphasizes the importance of making meaning of the experience. The design process for interview questions was inducted by the researcher using these phenomenological themes to describe components of ROPES.

Validity is presently a debated topic in qualitative research. Seidman (2013, p. 27) states that "Many qualitative researchers disagree with the epistemological assumptions underlying the notion of validity." Disagreements about semantics, vocabulary, and procedure abound with researchers calling for universalism. Arguments aside, content validity was addressed in the current study by creating a research instrument capable of

measuring perceptions of ROPES, which included formulating comprehensive questions, which neither led nor directed participants to respond in a way other than to reflect their own perceptions. This included open-ended, non-directive questions about the participant's perceptions of ROPES as rehearsed above. Once comprehensive questions were compiled, they were reviewed by the dissertation committee.

Sufficiency of the data collection instrument was established by conducting research on qualitative research methods, experimenting using various syntactical combinations, and reviewing qualitative and phenomenological studies to understand variables involved in designing an instrument that mines for essences of the phenomenon. Dissertation team members were consulted for quality control. Sufficiency of the data collection instrument encompasses the central research question followed by seven subsequent questions further probing for perceptions about the course. One purpose of the research design is to link the participant's experiences to the theoretical frameworks used within this study. Therefore, question design was purposeful to elicit participant's perspectives on conflict resolution to search for theoretical threads within their experience.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Possible participants originated from a pool of 187 total ROPES graduates. From that pool, thirty-nine participants still remained in the facility in general population and, therefore, received the hand-delivered *Invitation to Participate in the ROPES Course Study* by the facility program coordinator. The invitation indicated the date and time of the informed consent meeting, boxes indicating the recipient's consent or denial of the

invitation and a place for their signature. A copy of the invitation to participate in the ROPES course study is located in Appendix A. Invitations were manually gathered by the program coordinator and turned over to the primary investigator. Twenty-three recipients committed to attend the consent form meeting and sixteen invitees declined.

Seventeen recipients ultimately attended consent form meetings, which were group meetings held on five separate occasions. Some reasons inmates did not attend other than declining to attend included being transferred to another facility, being sent to maximum security, and being involved in a stabbing incident.

During the consent form meeting, prospective participants were introduced to the research assistant. The primary investigator and research assistant explained the details of the study including dangers, benefits, and dynamics associated with withdrawal from the study. The consent form for this study is located in Appendix B. Participants who agreed to participate in the study signed the consent form, scheduled their individual interview, were assigned a participant code, and were provided an interview reminder indicating their interview date, time, and room. Following the consent form meetings, an e-mail was sent to the facility's program coordinator indicating the date, time, and room of the individual interviews in order to arrange for participant escorts on the day of the interviews.

Four inmates who agreed to participate in the study did not due to being transferred to a new facility prior to the study, an unexpected court date in another county, illness, and failure to keep an interview appointment. Thirteen recipients were ultimately interviewed. This explanation of the reduction process from 187 possible

participants to thirteen interviews demonstrates the complexities of conducting research with inmates.

Data for this study was collected by the research assistant, Julia Loughney, and audio-taped using an Olympus Note Corder DP-201 tape recorder. Thirteen individual interviews were held on eight separate dates spanning approximately seven weeks beginning October 20, 2015 and concluding on December 3, 2015. Interviews were scheduled on Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. The IRB protocol specified 45 to 90 minutes for each interview, however, interviews were as short as four minutes, thirty-seven seconds and as long as twenty-four minutes. Total interview time was one hundred and thirty minutes and ninety-nine seconds. The shortest interview was included with the data because, although the participant did not elaborate on an extensive basis, the participant did demonstrate a new-found capacity for empathy. In addition, this participant was incarcerated before the age of thirteen and did not graduate from a traditional high school. As such, the interview represents a percentage of inmates who are less articulate but want to contribute what they can.

A maximum of three interviews per visit were scheduled in order to accommodate the schedules of both the inmates and the research assistant. Interviews were held in two rooms within the jail. Both interview locations were equipped with video surveillance cameras and an immediate response panic button.

Signed consent forms were copied and attached to individual questionnaire forms with the date, time, location, and code name of the participant. A copy of the consent form had the participant's name and jail location and was detached from the

questionnaire and given to the participant at the beginning of the interview. The questionnaire was used during the interview and then returned to the primary researcher after the interview. This process allowed the research assistant to have access to the name of the participant to call for and commence the interview and then separate the documents, maintaining anonymity.

Copies of the consent forms and questionnaires along with the tape recorder were contained in a locked box and delivered to the research assistant immediately prior to each scheduled interview event. Two keys were maintained for the locked box, one each for the primary researcher and the research assistant. Interviews began by dispensing a copy of the signed consent form to the participant and collecting demographic information. The primary researcher met the research assistant immediately after each interview sequence to debrief and transfer the lockbox with the recorder and questionnaire(s). The lockbox was then transported to the PI's home office where it was kept in a locked cabinet between interviews.

Data transcription was conducted by the primary researcher in her home office within a day of each interview using headphones to maintain privacy and setting the recorder to 1/5 time for clarity. After each transcription, the data was reviewed for discrepancies and corrections. Individual interview data was then added to a compilation document. All Word documents were password protected and all forms are secured in a locked file cabinet in the primary researcher's home office.

After transcribing the first two interviews, the principle investigator discussed language modifications with the research assistant. After four interviews, time

adjustments were made reducing interview time from forty-five minutes per interview to twenty-five minutes per interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed data transcription and included several detailed steps using a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. The first step in phenomenology requires researchers to disclose biases at the onset of research in an effort to limit subjectivity. This process is known as epoche or bracketing. Clark Moustakas (1994, p. 86) describes the challenges of the epoch, stating: “to be transparent to ourselves, to allow whatever it is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner.” Epoche, for me, included acknowledging biases toward the efficacy of a program I created and beliefs about the population with whom it is my purpose to work. In so doing, I consciously created the space to let the participants tell their story. This allowed me to view them as individual agents providing critical feedback. It also created the space to provide interpretations I might not wholly comprehend. The final interpretations represent their descriptions of the ROPES course.

Because I am personally familiar with the study participants, subjugating biases was difficult. Because interviews were transcribed within a day of being recorded and I was aware of who was being interviewed, I was aware of the interviewee. One technique I used that proved surprisingly effective was to slow the tape recorder down so as to alter the voice. This made it easier to transcribe the data and changed the voice of the participant enough that was not thinking about who it was but focused, instead, on what

they said. Another technique I used to bolster this process was to exchange subjectivity for curiosity and concern regarding the effectiveness of the course in an effort to better discern what it is they need to assist in the desistance process. I find inmates to be painfully honest. Their honesty coupled with the fact that critical review is rarely easy made this endeavor personally intimidating. However, it is a necessary first step toward the objective oversight crucial for refinement if the program is to be successful. Putting aside personal ego and keeping the main goal in sight in an effort to create a product in the furtherance of the desistance process must remain paramount.

Following bracketing and transcription was data analysis which encompassed examining each statement in regards to significant descriptions of the experience. This process was completed manually by examining thirty pages of data, which represented all of the interview data, grouped by question, on a landscape printout. The logic behind analyzing the data manually was to have a clear understanding of the phenomenological process and to internalize both the process and the results. Manual processing allows identification of clusters of meaning while maintaining conscious awareness of my own influences on the research outcomes.

This method employed a coding process for each significant statement, beginning with an anchor code, which represented the research question. For instance, responses to question one began with the code "Q1." Next, value codes were assigned as follows: values "V", beliefs "B", and attitudes "A." This allowed me to siphon out various categorical concepts. I also inserted three additional codes, which represented emotions "E", metaphors "M", and efficacy "EF." Each statement was identified using the

“comment” function in Word. The process resulted in 450 comments. Next I created eight separate documents representing each of the eight interview questions by cutting and pasting each statement from the larger interview compilation sheet into individual documents. I then entered a numerical code representative of the participant who made the comment. I was then able to combine overlapping statements and synthesize each question. This process using the comments function in Word allowed for easy manipulation of data by question, participant, theme, and or code.

These categories were then synthesized into meaning units and themes of “what” the participant experienced or a textural description of the experience. Subsequently, a description of “how” the experience happened, which is called the structural description was created. The final phase was to integrate a textural-structural description representing the essence of the experience. Manual processing resulted in identification of clusters of meaning while maintaining conscious awareness of my own influences on the research outcomes. Discrepant narratives were included in the data analysis under “other” as all perceptions are valued.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Authors Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman engage in an ongoing controversial dialogue in their book *Designing Qualitative Research* (2011) regarding the “politics of knowledge.” They maintain that between the two research methodologies, quantitative research is the gold standard for research. They described ways in which the academic community seeks the continuity of this gold standard. However, revolution abounds in the age of postmodernity with torch-bearers such as physicist Thomas S.

Kuhn, author of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), questioning the notion of tradition in the politics of knowledge. The subject is broached here as the qualitative research community compares and competes with its quantitative sibling. The issue of validity in qualitative research and the inability for clear definitions is just one example. The qualitative community has thus far failed to create universal terms and definitions as it applies to validity (Creswell, 2007; Golafshani, 2003).

Credibility. Credibility was approached in this study as defined by research experts, striving to achieve credibility as permitted within this study's restricted research environment. According to Creswell (2007) credibility includes standards such as structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy. Structural corroboration is defined as using multiple types of data to support or contradict an interpretation. Golafshani (2003) uses the term *triangulation*. As stated earlier, the data for this study consists of interviews only, therefore, triangulation does not apply. Consensual validation includes mutual understanding of results and was incorporated in this study through the collaboration of the research assistant in the data interpretation process. Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer the concept of "peer debriefing." They described peer debriefing as "exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session for the purpose of exploring aspects of inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). Peer debriefing was accomplished by consulting with another qualitative researcher and doctoral candidate, Ann Marie Moynihan. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed referential adequacy as the use of recorded materials to provide a means for capturing data for later use. Referential

adequacy was incorporated through the use of audio-taped interviews for reference during the analysis process. Finally, referential adequacy was also accomplished through the consistent and repeated analysis of the data.

Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 250) stated that credibility within the study “depends on the use of rigorous methods of fieldwork, on the credibility of the researcher, and on the ‘fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking.’” They delineate three criteria for a sound study, which include: 1) seeing to the overall soundness of the study, 2) demonstrating usefulness of a particular framework by the researcher, and 3) demonstrating the ability to be the researcher. Moustakas’ (1994) definition of credibility suggests the researcher must be proficient and exhaustive in the research process. The criteria outlined above have been established in this study by following the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen analysis procedures, which were reviewed and approved by the dissertation team, the county commission representing the jail, the State of Utah Departmental Review Board, and Nova Southeastern University’s Institution Review Board. In addition, the researcher performed exhaustive research, protocol preparation, and goal implementation coupled with the accumulation of over twenty years of experience working with and teaching corrections clients, including three year of teaching in the jail setting.

Marshall and Rossman’s three criteria for a sound study included rigorous methods of fieldwork, researcher credibility, and appreciation of the study process. These criteria were established by studying and closely following the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen

analysis methods, an extensive review of research practices and consultation and collaboration with qualitative researchers as well as on-going communication with dissertation committee members. Finally, the researcher must show an appreciation of the study process. This criterion cannot be understated by this researcher. The opportunity to conduct phenomenological research has been a dream of mine for years. The ability to live out this dream and to work with this population cannot be understated. Suffice it to say that I was warned several times, by several researchers, professors, and academics not to focus on inmates for my dissertation. I have no regrets.

Transferability. Creswell (2007) stated the rich, thick description of the phenomenon allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability. This is due to the detailed depictions of both the participants and the setting in which the study was conducted supporting application to other settings other. This validation technique is based on shared characteristics. Marshall and Rossman (2013, p. 252) describe transferability as the way in which the study can be “useful to others in similar situations” However, they add that transferability is seen as problematic using traditional standards. To address this issue they suggest referring back to the original theoretical frameworks for methodological guidance. In this way, the replicating researcher can make the decision regarding generalizability of the study. This study was formulated with future research in mind. Therefore, the researcher labored to obtain the thick, robust descriptions relied upon for transferability, which included extensive use of direct quotes from the participants.

Dependability. Nahid Golafshani (2003, p. 601) described dependability using concepts such as consistency or reliability. Consistency is addressed through the verification of the research steps using raw data, analysis process notes, and the products of data reduction. Following Golafshani's description of dependability raw data and the resulting notes were referred to on numerous occasions to infer meaning. Marshall and Rossman (2013, p. 253) describe dependability as the researcher's plan to account for "changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study and changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting." Examples of depicting changes in the current study included predicting and allotting forty-five to ninety minutes for each individual interview later to find out that they would last an average of ten minutes. Adjustments were made contracting the time allotment for individual interviews from forty-five minutes each to twenty-five minute time allotments each. In addition, adjustments were made for inmates who were transferred out, sick, or were on lock-down during their scheduled interviews. Interviews were rescheduled, when possible.

Confirmability. Confirmability is compared by Marshall and Rossman (2013) to objectivity or the ways in which outcomes reached by one researcher can be confirmed by another. This includes explaining logical inferences and explaining the interpretive nature of the study so others will understand. In addition, the researcher must explain or defend the subjective nature of the study and outcomes. The use of bracketing is essential and allows subsequent researchers a view of the previous researcher's perspectives. Bracketing proved essential to this study for me as the primary researcher who was involved in teaching the course and in the interpretation of the data.

Other examples of confirmability utilized in this study incorporated the use of a research assistant who collected data and helped to analyze the data, questioned perceptions, and provided valuable input. In addition, the use of previous literature to understand the process and analyze the data was paramount in the analysis process. Researching and citing literature on bias and subjectivity proved beneficial in the analysis process. Conscious awareness of subjectivity and documenting it served to aid the process of subjective deactivation. Acknowledging the connection to both the study and the participants during the bracketing process allowed me to understand that ultimately, the description of the experience was theirs, not mine. As such, it should be conveyed in the most authentic manner possible.

Ethical Procedures

The Road to Research with Inmates

In order to gain access to inmates for the purpose of conducting research, various levels of approval were required. The journey began in September of 2013, when the ROPES course was first instituted at the facility where the research was ultimately conducted. Although at the time there was no intention of conducting research in a jail setting, this portion of the journey and establishing myself as a reliable, trustworthy, and credible trainer, laid a crucial foundation. It entailed hard work, integrity, and dedication, which involved showing up when scheduled, working through adversity, and following through on promises and agreements.

Establishing the ROPES course in jail proved both exciting and frustrating. Some unique dynamics associated with working in jail include flexibility and patience, a

(literally) confined workspace, and trusting yourself and your skills enough to be locked down with a risk-related population. Flexibility and patience begin upon facility entry as each of the seven steel-barred doors leading to the classroom are electronically operated by staff in central control. Facility rules mandate instructors obtain a panic button prior to conducting class, lengthening rather than shortening the journey to the classroom.

Flexibility and patience are further tested as participants are escorted en masse to the classroom at the discretion and suitability of the guards. In reality, this means a ninety-minute class may ultimately end up as short as forty-five minutes or as long as two hours.

As a practice, I purposefully do not access public charging information available on ROPES participants. Instead, I trust the program coordinator to enroll participants at his discretion. I have been told in the past of participants charged with homicide or have seen their cases in the news. For structure purposes, I present guidelines for the course on the first and second days of class, with updates as needed. The information stipulates participants get one warning before they are removed from the roll. Thus far, I have not extracted a participant. In general, they tend to self-select out when their antics are not met with satisfactory rewards. In addition, having a history of working with corrections clients coupled with training in crisis negotiation and conflict and crisis management serves to bolster both my self-confidence and self-efficacy in working with risk-related populations. The classroom is located in a central hall and has one wall of windows facing a main, well-used corridor and video surveillance cameras rotating intermittently between various rooms within the jail.

During dissertation proposal defense, committee members suggested utilizing a research assistant in order to incorporate distance and objectivity in the study. Being a distance student and several states away from campus made the proposal challenging with regards to accessing qualified candidates, however, reaching out to previous associates from work and schools in my home state proved fruitful and a research assistant was procured. The next step was to appropriate approval for research from the facility.

After establishing the ROPES course for over a year, a proposal meeting was held to discuss the idea of conducting research to jail administration. The meeting covered information including the dissertation topic and methodology, academic and dissertation team information, the purpose of the study, the problem statement, and the study methodology. The discussion also included an overview of qualified inmates for the study, data collection method, and an anticipated start date. Risks associated with research in jail were disclosed as well as potential benefits, such as transparency, to the facility. This was followed by a review of protection of rights of human subjects along with items to be submitted by the researcher for approval prior to research. Research approval was granted. The next step for approval was sought from the county in which the jail is located.

County approval began with the formulation of a research agreement between the researcher and the county commission. A research agreement was drafted by the primary investigator. Discussions with the county's civil attorney on the research agreement lasted three months. The final agreement detailed documents the researcher is responsible

for sharing with the county, outlined the researcher's obligations as well as the role of the facility, and discussed the role of the research assistant. Other elements discussed included the protocol on confidentiality and an understanding that the facility and the county, including staff, are not to be indemnified in the wake of a study-related misfortune. Once county approval was received, state approval was next.

State approval through the Utah Department of Corrections was required due to the fact that a portion of participants in the study would include state inmates housed in the county facility. Comparatively, state approval was straightforward and unencumbered with a relatively short turn-around time between submission of the application and approval.

The final approval to conduct research with inmates through Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board will be discussed in more detail below. To summarize, the process took approximately four months, notwithstanding amendments. A side note in this journey—once the IRB approval was secured, the original research assistant opted out of the study. In his defense the process had taken nine months and in the interim he had received a master's degree and moved on.

There was a plan in place for occasions such as this with a back-up research assistant, however, the back-up fell through as well. The search for a new research assistant began by contacting all of the academic institutions within a forty-mile radius of the facility and posting flyers on university "Opportunity Boards." Once a new research assistant was secured and she completed CITI training, positive criminology training (as per IRB protocol), and the IRB amendment for her approval was secured, the study

moved forward. NSU IRB No. 05141507F received final approval on July 15, 2015 with two amendments to follow on September 9, 2015 and September 30, 2015.

Working Within the Jail

In order to conduct research within the jail, the research assistant was processed through the facility as a volunteer, which included a background check and facility orientation. In the meantime, communication with the program coordinator was essential due to the significant role he played in the research process. The PI utilized the inmate roster on the official county website to identify ROPES graduates still located in the jail. A list of qualified inmates was generated and shared with the program coordinator who then hand-delivered the invitations to participate in the study. Because of his role in the research process, it was crucial he understand that prospective participants are, in no way, to be pressured or coerced into participation. The program coordinator was also responsible for logistics, collecting the signed and dated invitations to participate in research, arranging for rooms, scheduling the consent form meetings, and scheduling rooms with surveillance cameras as per IRB protocol for individual interviews with research participants.

Conducting research with an incarcerated population is intense. In addition to common standards and practices for the protection of human subjects in research, prisoners are considered a protected population and, therefore, accorded higher levels of protection. According to Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and procedures section A, the research study must fall under one or more

of four allowable categories as described in the federal regulations (45 CFR 46.306(a)(2)) in order to obtain IRB approval to conduct research with inmates.

This study qualified under policy A.4 of the policies and procedures, which allows for the study as long as “The study is on practices, both innovative and accepted, which have the intent and reasonable probability of improving the health or well-being of the subject” (University, 2011). As such, research projects involving prisoners must be reviewed by the full review board and comport with federal standards for working with prisoners.

Program provider’s guidelines, which are issued to anyone delivering jail programming, begin with the admonition not to share personal information such as personal address or phone number with inmates. For this reason, the consent form was modified to exclude personal information. The consent form disclosed the intent to audio record interviews, possible risks related to confidentiality lapses, and the efforts to keep information private. These efforts included coding all identifiable participant information, maintaining all data in a locked file cabinet in the principal investigator’s home and maintaining the audio recorder in a locked box inside the locked file cabinet until 36 months from the conclusion of the study at, which time it will be manually destroyed.

An outline delineating protocol in the case of adverse effects due to participating in the study was imparted to all participants. This included speaking with the research assistant about any anxiety or discomfort as a result of the study and discussing the possibility of contacting the facility’s counselor, if needed. In addition, prospective participants were informed there would be no repercussions for choosing to leave the

study, however, information collected about them before their departure would be kept in the research study for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as part of the research. Participants were informed that the PI had a financial interest as it relates to the study in that she is paid to teach ROPES at the facility. Participants were guaranteed autonomy in choosing whether or not to participate in this study. Participants were also informed there would be no direct benefits to them nor would they be paid or have to pay to participate in the study.

Data in the study was maintained as both anonymous and confidential. Upon consent to participate in the study, participants were issued a code, which was then used on the questionnaire. Only the research assistant and the primary research had the code key. Therefore, at the commencement of the audio-taped interview the research assistant would identify the participant by their code, creating distance between participant and identification. The code key was kept by the principal researcher in a notebook kept in a locked file cabinet.

Transcription was completed by the PI wearing headphones to ensure confidentiality. Each interview was transcribed using individual interview templates and inserting the participant's code as an identifying marker. Each individually typed interview was password-protected and the computer is password protected. Data dissemination will maintain confidentiality and access to the data is limited to persons outlined in the consent form—the IRB, regulatory agencies, or Dr. Elena Bastidas. As outlined in section 3.B of the IRB protocol, audio recorded data and paper files will be maintained in the locked file cabinet for thirty-six months following the conclusion of the

study at which time audio recordings will be erased and the audio recorder will be destroyed by the principal investigator using a hammer. Paper files will be destroyed through a cross-cut shredding process thirty-six months following the conclusion of the study. In the interim, only the principal investigator will have access to data associated with this study.

Ethical issues surrounding human research studies with prison inmates includes concerns over whether inmates are truly voluntary and/or have the ability to be so defined. This is a valid concern I have internalized and considered since the onset of the study. After much thought, three conclusions come to mind to address this point and are delineated as follows: 1) participants volunteered to attend ROPES and had the ability to opt out of the course or study at any time; 2) issues articulated by inmates regarding ROPES typically revolve around the ability to gain access to the class rather than methods for opting out; 3) conducting research in the environment where you conduct business could pose ethical issues, however, full disclosure of both the training components and research methodology and maintaining strict adherence of the proposed research design helped enforce compliance to ethical and methodological procedures. In the end, I have concluded the risks and restrictions involved in research with this demographic do not outweigh the benefits of providing conflict resolution training to a population with a proven need for such.

Summary. In this chapter I have summarized the research design and rationale and outlined the role of the researcher, research assistant, and the facility's program coordinator. The methodology was explained and included participant selection,

instrumentation, development of the instrument, recruitment, participation, and data collection. The data analysis process is explained including issues of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I detailed intricacies of working in jail with an incarcerated population. Finally, I delimited ethical procedures involved in working with inmates. Chapter four provides a detailed examination of the data analysis and discloses the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

“Conflict is the arrow pointing to what we most need to learn.” Kenneth Cloke
(Nova Southeastern University Residential Institute Presentation, February 19, 2011)

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe participant’s perceptions of the ROPES course, mining for self-efficacy in an effort to add qualitative perspectives to the body of research defining effective inmate programming. The central research question for this study is: What effect does holistic conflict resolution training have on inmate self-efficacy? In that the dilemma of incarceration and rehabilitation is on-going, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the effects of a ten-session holistic conflict resolution course on inmate self-efficacy.

This chapter describes the setting for the research project along with the demographics of study participants. Data collection and analysis methods are reviewed followed by components of trustworthiness incorporated in the design methodology. The chapter concludes with findings from this research and a summary of the chapter. The unique setting in which this study was conducted provides insight into the intricacies of conducting research in a jail setting.

Setting

Participants of this study were incarcerated in a Utah jail and attended the ten-session ROPES course, culminating in a certificate of completion. As stated previously, invitations to attend the informed consent meeting were delivered to eligible inmates who were still housed at the jail at the time of the study. Recipients were asked to accept or

deny the invitation by checking the appropriate box on the form and returning it to the program coordinator. Several eligible ROPES participants had already been released, transferred or otherwise incapacitated, preventing their participation. Inmates who had been transferred from general population to a higher security holding at the time of the study are deemed ineligible for extracurricular activities.

Demographics

Participants in this study included thirteen male and female, county and state inmates. All participants were held in general population at the facility as opposed to maximum security and had received a certificate of completion for finishing the ROPES course. Aside from using inmates from general population, charging levels were not considered at any stage of the process as a screening method for participation in the course and subsequent study. Participants spoke English and comprised a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds as there are no identified restrictions. They represented a variety of academic levels and all were over the age of eighteen as necessitated for incarceration in this facility. Exclusions for this study included federal inmates located in the jail where the study took place who participated in ROPES and received a certificate of completion.

Results

Results for this study will unfold beginning with demographic information. It is my goal to represent participants to the best of my ability and allow their voices a platform. Seventeen people volunteered to participate and thirteen were interviewed. One inmate was sick on the day of the interview; one inmate chose not to keep his

appointment; one inmate was transferred out of the facility prior to his scheduled interview and one inmate had a court hearing scheduled on the day of the interview. I was unable to reschedule these interviews. A copy of the interview protocol and questionnaire is located in Appendix C.

Demographic information

Demographic questions gathered the following information: 1) gender, 2) holding agency, 3) age of participant at initial incarceration, and 4) whether they graduated from a traditional high school. Results revealed thirteen of seventeen who committed to participate, were able to do so which included eleven males and two females. The breakdown of participant holding agencies included seven state inmates and six county inmates. The final two demographic outcomes revealed the breakdown for age when first incarcerated and information regarding traditional high school graduation. Six of thirteen participants first entered detainment at or below the age of thirteen with the youngest being eight years of age. Three participants were between the ages of fourteen and eighteen when they were first detained. One participant was between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five when initially detained. Three participants were between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-two when they were first detained. Finally, nine of thirteen respondents did not graduate from a traditional high school, whereas four of thirteen respondents did. This parallels information provided in the literature review regarding U.S. inmate education. Inmates have been called the most educationally disadvantaged population in America by criminologists (Crayton & Neusteter 2008; Klein, Tolbert, Burgarin, Cataldi, & Tauschek, 2004). Although poor academic performance and lack of

high school graduation have not been shown to be a direct cause of criminal behavior, researchers have revealed an inverse relationship between education and recidivism (Arum & Beattie, 1999; Travis & Visser, 2005). A demographic table is located in Appendix D, Table 8.

As stated previously, because schools have increasingly assumed the responsibility for socializing youth in America, high school experiences are crucial for socialization. Further, high school occurs at a time in a youth's life when they are most likely to participate in criminal behavior (Arum & Beattie, 1999). This is a critical stage of moral, social, and psychological development (Arum & Beattie, 1999). Arum and Beattie go so far as to call high school a defining moment in one's life course and a crucial element affecting life's behaviors, next to family. They state that "Weak school attachment and poor school performance, measured as negative attitude toward school and low grades, also increase the probability of delinquency and adult life-course trajectories associated with criminal behaviors" (p. 518).

As such, it has become the job of the county, state, or federal system to address educational and social deficits present due to the lack of a secondary education, lack of social competency skills, and poor coping strategies, in preparation for community reentry. Prison programs such as ROPES work to teach social skills, filling in gaps created by the lack of traditional secondary education. The following analysis reveals responses to each of the individual interview questions in order to understand the essence of the phenomena.

Interview Questions

Question #1. *Can you describe, in as much detail as possible, your perceptions of conflict resolution following the ROPES course?*

Question one is an open-ended, evocative question created to address the central research question: What effect does holistic conflict resolution training have on inmate self-efficacy? Table 9 is a detailed account of question one responses, which can be found in Appendix D. Attending the ROPES course signals the desire for change.

Acquiring new skills and knowledge indicates the initiation of change and growth, which includes employing agency and self-determination to find a pathway to reach these goals. Successful application of conflict resolution applications symbolizes self-efficacy for participants.

Developing skills in a safe and accepting environment with like-minded participants adds to the experience while diverting from the drudgery of incarceration. Being able to apply some of the skills immediately signals to participants their own value as a human being, despite incarceration, by having something to offer to others. For instance, upon attending the listening session, participants are able to apply listening skills and experience the value it brings to another inmate or family member in need of someone to listen to them. On a deeper level, participation and the precipitating desire for change signifies resilience associated with incarcerated learners. Underlying resilience and effort, hope for a better future proliferates and motivates. This process demonstrates that choice and a willingness to risk merge on the pathway for self-improvement which ultimately culminates in change and empowerment.

Significant Statements. Analysis of the data provided by study participants revealed examples demonstrating the central concept of the study, which is self-efficacy in conflict resolution. Bandura's (1977) description of self-efficacy is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce outcomes, in this instance the outcome includes better relationships. Participants described being able to approach conflict with a sense of confidence, "So if I have conflict at all I can approach a person more like, um, assertive and I can go to them if I have a problem with them and I can do eye to eye contact" (P1). Statements supported self-efficacy in conflict resolution experiences with family members, "I actually used some of the things she taught us out of it like with my family" (P1). The application of conflict resolution skills in jail was also described "I've actually applied a lot of the things I've learned in Chris' class back in the section" (P11). Further, self-efficacy is demonstrated through life-style changes as noted by one participant, "Cause I've been a gang member all my life. This time I actually gave it up, ya know...I'm still learning how to walk away from it but it helped me out a lot" (P15). These statements demonstrate the conviction and execution of behaviors required to produce new outcomes, the very definition of self-efficacy.

Knowledge and skill acquisition. Participants discussed knowledge and skills they found useful as a result of attending the course including communication skills, "I've learned, still working on it, but not to interrupt people" (P1). Impulse control was also identified, "I think what sticks out for me the most from the ROPES course is not acting on impulse and conflict will resolve itself, basically" (P4). Assertiveness was a valuable topic to respondents and was reiterated on several occasions throughout the interviews

and demonstrated by P7, “Statements of assertiveness can help in that it can state specifically the things you want without, um, being unreasonable.” Assertiveness skills replace traditional, unproductive, and all-too-common communications styles such as passive-aggressive and aggressive tendencies which are “I” centered as opposed to “us” centered. Problem-solving skills proved beneficial, “We can think things out and make clear decisions, be logical about our decisions” (P7). Examples of acquired skills and knowledge imbed a sense of merit shared by participants and imparted throughout the interviews and the application of the skills support self-efficacy.

Perceptions. It was significant to capture participant’s perceptions about the course in an effort to disclose the essence of their experience. Perceptions were detailed throughout the interview process and included a variety of insights. Initial analysis featured topics such as the importance of having a plan (P7), looking at conflict differently (P9), and gaining options for conflict resolution (P10, P14). Evaluative statements regarding the course included, “it was cool” (P13), “I think it’s a wonderful class” (P11), and, “It’s cool. I enjoyed it” (P15).

Emotional literacy. Emotional literacy is a central theme in the ROPES course and central to self-efficacy in conflict resolution. Elements of emotional literacy gained from ROPES participation included emotional regulation as described by P2, “It’s helped me to communicate and articulate my...what’s going on with me and what I want and like deal with things with less of an emotional reaction.” This participant elucidates how emotional regulation is utilized within conflict to curtail escalation and move toward resolution. Participant 7 identifies self-awareness as an essential component in conflict

resolution, stating, “The ROPES course was dedicated to helping us understand ourselves such as trigger points and self-awareness.” The ability to identify triggers is critical for buffering reactivity and essential for conflict resolution.

Question #2. *Do you believe your ability to deal with conflict has changed following ROPES; and, if so, how?*

Question two seeks to identify self-efficacy as it pertains to conflict resolution, which is the heart of this study. All study participants affirmed changes and articulated adapted competencies following the ROPES course. Themes of change are crucial for transformation, abound in the data, and demonstrate both the willingness and ability to change when motivated. Changes are detected in the language of participant statements, using terms such as “I’m more willing now...” (P13), “so I try...” (P6), and “I’m learning...” (P15). The data emanating from question two reflect the participant’s ability to detect and articulate changes in themselves fostering agency, hope, and empowerment. The resulting outcomes are seen not only in how they interact with others but in how they view themselves. This perspective becomes less about someone who is hopeless and discarded and more about someone with the ability to learn, change, and add value to society.

Table 1

Question #2

<i>Do you believe your ability to deal with conflict has changed following ROPES, and if so, how?</i>		
All respondents affirmed perceived changes following ROPES. Some examples are provided in this table.		
P	Adapted Competency	Reflective Statements
P1	Perspective	Yes, it has. It has totally changed my perspective from where I was when I first.
P1	Impulse control	Instead of me going and attacking like I normally would, I brought it up in group and we resolved it.
P2	Assertiveness	I used to be passive-aggressive. It's helped me express things better.
P4	Empathy development	I used to get into conflict with my girlfriend. Previous to the ROPES course I just wouldn't, I just wasn't putting myself in her shoes as much as I should have.
P7	Personal development	Self-awareness, thinking positive, getting away from the negative thinking, of denial, blaming others, and extremes like always and never and being able to just breath realizing what my trigger points are when I start to doubt myself. I look at things I once considered as totally negative or wrong...as opportunities for growth.
P9	Skillset	I was given a few options and was able to use one of them that I agreed with.
P10	Listening	Listen all the way through instead of just getting in my feelings and feeling how I feel about it.
P11	Impulse control	I would probably have been to max already 3 times over I haven't done that so far and I only got less than a year left.
P12	Impulse control/Non-violence	I've been down for a little while now, almost a decade and ah, dang, whole time I've been down I was with violence but after doing this class, it's the longest I've been in population.
P12	Assertiveness	Just being in this class, learning how to be assertive, um, and how to talk instead of, um, result to violence I guess I learned most from this class.
P13	Empathy development	So it helped me to like calm down and see both sides.
P13	Self-awareness	Like I'm more willing now to look at what I'm doing versus just being naïve like "oh well, I should have realized that this dude didn't really like what I was doing."
P14	Conflict	I had a situation... one individuals in our pods... we always

	resolution, assertiveness	get the TV shut off... so when I approach that person, ya know, he kind of like, understood... "I appreciate the fact that you brought it to my attention, ya know, because like other people would disrespect ya and calling me kind of like different names." So when I approach that person, ya know, he kind of like, understood, ya know, he understood.
P15	Breaking anti-social bonds	It's kind of hard but I finally decided just to put her as part of my past. My past is what was ruining my life.
P15	Emotional expression	I'm learning how to speak, speak from my feelings instead of anger, ya know.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Significant Statements. Behavior changes represented a variation in themes as noted by various participants. Participant 1 compared the differences between previous attacking behavior and implementing new resolution skills, "Instead of me going and attacking like I normally would, I brought it up in group and we resolved it." This example demonstrates both behavior changes and self-efficacy in conflict resolution. Other examples of self-efficacy and behavior changes were expressed using through the ability to remain in general population as opposed to being sent to maximum security as stated by P11, "I would probably have been to max already three times over I haven't done that so far and I only got less than a year left" and P12 "I've been down for a little while now, almost a decade and ah, dang, whole time I've been down I was with violence but after doing this class, it's the longest I've been in population." For those of us who have never experienced incarceration, remaining in general population may seem insignificant. However, for a population whose every movement is controlled by others, having autonomy and self-determination over negative impulses is inestimable.

Social changes were also depicted by participants and included empathy, listening, emotional expression, and impulse control. Empathy was generated as participants recognized their former inability to understand where another person was coming from, “I just wasn’t putting myself in her shoes as much as I should have” (P4); “So I try to understand where she’s coming from” (P6). Participants demonstrated communication changes in themselves as stated succinctly by P2, “I used to be passive-aggressive. It’s helped me express things better.” Central to empathy and communication are listening skills, discussed by P10, “listen all the way through instead of just getting in my feelings.”

Personal changes included assertiveness, self-awareness, personal development, and emotional regulation. Assertiveness was acknowledged by P2, stating: “I used to be passive-aggressive. It’s helped me express things better.” The value of learning assertiveness and utilizing the skill was reiterated by P12, stating: “just being in this class, learning how to be assertive, um, and how to talk instead of um result to violence I guess I learned most from this class.” Self-awareness was another personal change attributed to ROPES. Participants discussed the ability to “Put themselves in check” (P8) and be “more willing to look at what I’m doing.” (P13). Whereas general changes included attaining a new skillset, being taught options for conflict resolution, and communicating effectively. Question three delves deeper into the topic of change, asking participants to describe specific changes they have made as a result of participating in ROPES.

Question #3. *Have you made any changes as a result of participating in ROPES?*

Can you describe those changes?

There is no doubt that thoughts influence actions. Therefore, in an effort to motivate inmates to affect lasting transformation, they must first make internal changes. Question three exhibits behavior modification implemented by participants, demonstrating self-efficacy. In addition to self-efficacy, the participants demonstrate a level of resilience simply by taking part in the course and applying new skills. The course is offered in jail, which is a place often equated with “hitting bottom.” ROPES participants refuse to give up on themselves, unlike many inmates who reject educational opportunities and, often, ridicule those that do. Instead, ROPES participants attend class, participate in exercises, and complete homework in an effort to better themselves. These efforts define hope and resilience. Similar to the previous two questions, the data emanating from question three reflect the participant’s ability to detect and articulate changes in themselves fostering agency, hope, and empowerment. In addition, the experience allows them access to alter how they interact with others resulting in an enriched perspective of themselves.

Significant Statements. Table 2 which displays outcomes for question three seeks elements of change and is divided into internal changes and external changes. Internal changes are not always discernable whereas external changes are more easily detected. Although internal changes may go undetected, they are crucial in the transformation process. Some changes identified by participants included self-talk, self-awareness, self-confidence, focus, and mindfulness. The table below represents participant changes.

Table 2

Question #3

<i>Have you made any changes as a result of participating in ROPES? (Prompt: can you describe those changes?)</i>		
P	Adapted Competency	Significant statement
<i>Internal</i>		
P1	Self-talk	Self-talk is the biggest one I've learned and how to change negative feelings into something positive.
P1	Self-awareness	And working through these sessions that she gives us um I learned how to identify my feelings (self-awareness).
P2	Self-confidence	I know myself better than I used to and I can recognize different triggers or high-risk situations better. I have more confidence now.
P4	Focus	I'm more focused on like actually changing not just surface changing and I think that comes with ROPES and every other class I'm taking in here.
P8	Mindfulness	That's something that I'm trying to continue to do. I don't have, ya know, soothing music in here to do that but um I've been doing my best to make that a consistent thing.
P14	Self-awareness	that's the thing I appreciate from her was, ya know, the fact that, ya know, try to keep in mind what tools or things that, ya know, you're trying to work on not taking it too personal so that was one of my basic goals was trying [not] to take things so personally.
<i>External</i>		
P6	Social skills	I choose to pay more attention to people.
P7	Respect	Being able to talk assertively, logically, rationally, um using the skills that we learned in class helps work though those conflicts without creating fights uh over the tv or between inmates. Allows us more freedoms and respect from the guards when we can handle our own problems.
P9	Impulse control	...instead of being a smart aleck about it I just bit my tongue and laughed at it and walked away from it.
P10	Listening skills	Yeah, just to listen more instead of just talking so much.
P12	Elimination of negative influences	I had to cut ties with people that I love but they hold me down, they're not positive influences. Just being in this class taught me how.
P13	Impulse control	I come into the situation or if I'm feeling like it's gonna be hostile then I try to calm down and I show respect and like, that's what I catch myself in the section when I'm talking to

		peers
--	--	-------

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Internal changes. Self-talk is essential in everyday life for motivation and encouragement. The effects of using positive self-talk is discussed by P1, “Self-talk is the biggest one I’ve learned and how to change negative feelings into something positive.” Essential to self-talk is the skill of self-awareness, which also proved influential to P1, “And working through these sessions that she gives us, um, I learned how to identify my feelings.” Self-awareness also surfaced surrounding the topic of goal setting. The ability to set goals and follow through is necessary for behavior change. Participant 14 identified setting a personal goal not to take things too personally, “so that was one of my basic goals was trying [not] to take things so personally.” This goal also incorporates emotional intelligence in the form of self-awareness, identifying the need to be less sensitive.

Self-confidence often emanates from self-awareness and positive self-talk. Participant 2 discussed the reasons self-confidence matters, “I know myself better than I used to and I can recognize different triggers or high-risk situations better. I have more confidence now.” This comment incorporates both self-awareness and self-confidence.

The concepts of internal versus external change is recognized by the inmates, themselves, as demonstrated by P4 in the comment, “I’m more focused on like actually changing not just surface changing and I think that comes with ROPES and every other class I’m taking in here.” Mindfulness was discussed as a valuable component by participant 8 and something to be continued after ROPES, “That’s something that I’m trying to continue to do. I don’t have, ya know, soothing music in here to do that but um

I've been doing my best to make that a consistent thing." A final example of internal change that lead to a dramatic external action was demonstrated by participant 12 who cut ties with a long-time girlfriend after recognizing she was not a positive influence in his life. "I had to cut ties with people that I love but they hold me down, they're not positive influences. Just being in this class taught me how." As demonstrated in this example, all external skills are preceded by some degree of internal change.

External changes. External changes encompassed several elements including enhanced social skills, respect for others, impulse control, listening, eliminating negative influences, and contributing toward better relationships as identified by P6, "I choose to pay more attention to people." Listening skills are essential to focused attention to another, "Yeah, just to listen more instead of just talking so much" (P10). Social and listening skills contribute toward an outcome of respect as identified by P7, "Being able to talk assertively, logically, rationally, um, using the skills that we learned in class helps work through those conflicts without creating fights, uh, over the TV or between inmates. Allows us more freedoms and respect from the guards when we can handle our own problems." In this case, not only did the participant experience a level of self-respect due to conflict resolution skills but also experienced a level of respect from the guard.

Another example of an external change made as a result of ROPES was impulse control. The ability to walk away from a situation rather than fight is critical in jail to avoid being sent to maximum security. This ability is depicted by P9 when he stated, "...instead of being a smart aleck about it I just bit my tongue and laughed at it and walked away from it." In another example, a respondent explained it a different way, "I

come into the situation or if I'm feeling like it's gonna be hostile then I try to calm down and I show respect and like, that's what I catch myself in the section when I'm talking to peers" (P13). Next respondents commented on what stood out most to them about the training.

Question #4. *What stood out to you about the training and why?*

Some respondents participated in the course months and even a year or more before the interview. Responses represent an array of answers reflecting the holistic nature of the course. Responses indicate that some experiences introduced participants to new concepts in relationship building. An example includes realizing that through assertiveness skills, one is able to stand up for their own beliefs, opinions, and express needs in a non-offensive and respectful manner. Another example includes emotional expressiveness in the safety of the Circle. Finally, participants found value in learning about how negative influences can deter their own personal success.

Responses to this question elicited reflections regarding the course itself which participants experienced as a process that flowed, transcended conflict resolution, and was in-depth. In addition, respondents reflected on the impact the instructor had on the course citing examples of patience, interested in them, and a good listener. Being treated with respect and compassion as participants in the course created an experiential component showing what it means and how it feels to connect with others thus, adding an additional layer of meaning beyond skill acquisition. Responses to this interview question were divided into five categories. A comprehensive list of responses to question four can be found in Table 10 in Appendix D.

Significant Statements. Course elements. Reflections on the course itself includes “amazing” (P1) and “it flowed” (P2). Another respondent felt it “definitely transcended just that one notion of conflict resolution and I actually appreciated that” (P8). Finally, participant 10 commented, “How in-depth the class is. It’s a lot more than anybody would realize.”

The instructor. The subsequent category includes comments about the course instructor beginning with professionalism, “The teacher. She’s very professional. She walked you through it and if you had questions or concerns and still weren’t sure she just sat there and listened to you” (P1). Another respondent appreciated the instructor’s interest, “What stood out is because she took interest in, she took interest in all of us and wasn’t about herself and just her class; tried to help us with it instead of just following the course and not taking opinions from anybody; Teacher paid attention instead of just collecting a check” (P9). Another comment recognized the instructor’s patience, “She stood out the most because she took the time to explain things and she let us like role-play whatever I guess and she let us see how it worked, man. And that was, uh, more than anything I’ve ever got out of a class because you know the teachers in prison they just give you paperwork, have you watch a video or whatever” (P14). These responses signify participant’s feelings of being respected, as a result of the instructor’s modeling of positive criminology.

Perspectives. Perspective taking is a category that shows how participants responded cognitively to the course. Responses include the notion of “choice” as reflected by P6, “I just realized that it’s up to you to decide to use it and if you do use it

then it definitely works” and the idea of trust as reflected by P14, “I’m more open; And so it did help me in a way where, ya know, now I’m more open.” Positive influences and positivity were included in this category. Positive influences were explained by P7, “We need to be mindful of that and aware of who we let into our life and if it’s gonna affect us negatively and we don’t want it to then we need to find ways to get it out which we can do through the conflict resolution skills of being assertive, of setting goals, of having a plan of not being afraid to turn people away that aren’t good for us.”

Acquired skills. This category includes specific skills such as assertiveness, non-violent resolution, and consequential thinking. Statements about specific skills included: “Learning how to get your point across without being aggressive or passive, I guess, has really helped me out” (P12), and “Being able to stand up for myself to not be bullied so easily by myself and others” (P7). Other respondents noted non-violent resolution, “Ability to talk it out instead of fight it out” (P10), and consequential thinking, “Outside influences really can bring us down if we let them” (P7).

Other. This category of responses includes comments about Circle, homework, and course refinement. Participant 4 spoke of their experience in circle, stating, “Circle stood out for me because it was, it felt like I wasn’t being judged. I could say whatever I needed to, get it off my chest and it was gone. It wasn’t going to come back. Circle was really helpful for me.” Participant 14 noted challenges associated with the homework, stating, “The homework was kind of challenging because we all try to, ya know, avoid our past and stuff. We try to avoid things that we don’t want to dig up and things like that and then when she gave us homework and I had a choice, ya know, where I can say

‘should I do it or should I not.’ Finally, P13 provided advice on course refinement suggesting that the curriculum be watered down, “Water it down for this population; some participants didn’t get it; but it would be more beneficial uh for us to like take the time to make sure everybody got it cause I feel like some of them didn’t really get it.”

Question five seeks to understand whether skills and lessons in the course can be applied to situations during incarceration.

Question #5. *Has the ROPES course helped you during your incarceration?*

Please share an example.

This question may seem peculiar, however, prison culture has norms and customs that are unfamiliar to many who have not been incarcerated. For instance, it is customary to breathe quietly in jail so as not to disturb those around you. This truth was uncovered to me during a mindfulness session where audible breathing is encouraged. In jail, people actively seek to take advantage of others, therefore, assertiveness skills proved helpful for setting boundaries in an appropriate manner. Respondents indicated that skills proved effective for both relational and intra-personal purposes. In addition to assertive skills, respondents experienced a level of bonding and trust with other ROPES participants which continued on after the course concluded. Self-awareness served to help participants be attentive of communication patterns, be emotionally aware, and to provide situational awareness.

The ability to be introspective was an initial experience for some and a reminder for others. Introspection provided insight into current relationships and behavior. The ability to reflect on these personal and social elements allowed participants to make

changes as necessary representing choice, self-efficacy, agency, and empowerment. The competence to execute changes represents active participation toward self-improvement and the creation of a new narrative. As seen through the bonding experience denoted by P4 this includes experiencing a level of genuine acceptance and conscious rejection of the “inmate” or “offender” label.

A comprehensive depiction of responses to question five can be found in Table 11 in Appendix D. Responses to question five reveal that a variety of lessons learned in ROPES can be effectively practiced during incarceration. Responses were divided into two broad categories consisting of “relational” and “intra-personal/relational.” Responses in the “relational” category reflected skills such as assertiveness, bonding, and trust. Responses in the “intra-personal/relational” category reflected answers that bridge both internal and external changes.

Significant Statements. Relational. Responses within this category include *assertiveness*, “I’m no longer a doormat, um I can say “no” (P2); *bonding and trust*, “Like with the guys I was in here with. We’ve become closer and so we still talk about conflict and if we’re going through anything it’s still like we’re in class, basically. We go through it together” (P4); *stress reduction*, “That’s helped me too in the pod not worry so much about what other people think of me. I can stick to my couple of friends we play cards and work puzzles and talk and workout and I don’t have to worry about making sure I’m not in the way of other people” (P7) and *coping skills*, “to be able to deal with certain individuals that I may not like or may not have the same kind of background or have too many things in common” (P10).

Intra-personal/relational. Responses within this category include concepts such as *self-awareness and skill execution*, “I’m learning how to be an active listener. Not interrupt people. Give good feedback. Change my stinkin thinkin as she calls it into positive thinking and it’s just amazing all the stuff you do learn” (P1); *conflict resolution*, “All I cared about was myself. So now to understand when someone else is having problems communicating with me I choose to talk to them and figure out what the problem is and resolve it” (P6); *communication*, “I’ve realized with assistance of the course that I was becoming more of an aggressive communicator and I was... being rude...and I realized that that was unnecessary and just because I’m in jail” (P8); and *familial obligations*, “She’s two years old and I’ve been down the whole time and I think this class kind of helped me open my eyes because I feel that’s a conflict. It’s a conflict between what I want and what needs me out there” (P9). All of the responses demonstrate the ability to self-reflect and make adjustment, when possible.

Another response demonstrating a link between intra-personal awareness and relational attributes included here shows both *impulse control and behavior change*, “It’s just helped me stay out of trouble, man. It’s helped me think twice before I do or say anything” (P12); *stress reduction and empathy*, “So it helped me to like calm down and see both sides” (P13); and *perspective change* “Now that I see things in a very positive and open perspective that, ya know, if you got something to say, say it, ya know” (P14). The statements included above show the participant’s abilities to resolve conflict, to change behaviors, and to utilize coping skills. In addition, participants were able to

employ self-awareness and assertive communication while incarcerated. Changes in perspective were also achieved.

Question #6. *What, if any, components of ROPES will be helpful to you upon reentry to the community? Why do you think this will be helpful?*

On a speculative level, any response to this question represents a level of hope. Responses to this question demonstrate an understanding that communication skills practiced throughout the course can be used upon reentry. Respondents also provided examples of effective communication skills that could be applied. The principle of combined responses indicates an appreciation for skills learned and the ability and intent to apply those skills upon reentry. In addition, respondents indicated uses for intrapersonal skills in order to identify triggers, maintain self-awareness, and apply impulse control to affect different outcomes upon release. Cognizance of self-efficacy and believing in a personal ability to create desired outcomes is powerful and experienced as the capacity to create an altered identity.

Respondents identified various skills and components of ROPES they believed would be helpful to them upon reentry and provided contextual justifications. The skills were efficiently divided into “interpersonal skills” and “intrapersonal skills.”

Table 3

Question #6

<i>What, if any, components of ROPES will be helpful to you upon reentry to the community? Why do you think this will be helpful?</i>			
P	New skill	Justification	Reflective Statement
<i>Interpersonal skills</i>			
P1	Effective Communication	Because everything is going to hit me at once	If I can just remember the conflict and the active listening and just remember that um I do have feelings and I can express myself better than being aggressive then I think I'm gonna, I really enjoy these tools.
P4	Emotional Expression	Because I won't be holding all that inside	Circle once again because it helped me state my feelings without feeling judged and if I can do that with like my girlfriend and my family then it's gonna be better for me because I won't be holding all that inside. Circle exercise helps me because I can communicate effectively.
P8	Assertive Communication	You can't help the way that people behave	That I am an effective communicator and that I can be assertive and not aggressive or passive-aggressive because I still struggle with that um and that it's important for me to keep myself in check and remember that ultimately I'm responsible for the way that I respond.
P12	Communication Skills	Your boss he can treat you however he wants	Looking on the streets, you work for your boss he can treat you however he wants. I mean he's your boss he don't got to respect you. So learning how to communicate is vitally important. I think that's one of the most important things that I've learned in this class.
P14	Assertive Communication	I won't ask if I need anything	Pretty much communication. Communication is the key because if to me I'm always one of them shy person that I won't ask if I need anything.
<i>Intrapersonal skills</i>			
P2	Self-awareness	Because otherwise you end up in red zones	I think that being able to identify certain triggers or um emotional emotions, I think that's really important because otherwise you end up in red zones.

P7	Self-awareness, Emotional Regulation	I know life won't be easy um finding places to work, places to live	But through these skills – through positive thinking, self-awareness, through assertiveness I feel more prepared that when I get out I can be stronger. I know life won't be easy um finding places to work, places to live but those coping skills, the things that um class helped us to identify as things that lift us up, that make us positive, that uh can keep us going when we're down will help me to keep going, to persevere, to not give up, to know that just because somebody won't hire me, that somebody doesn't like me doesn't mean nobody likes me, doesn't mean nobody will hire me
P11	Consequential Thinking Skills	I used to always just act first.	Conflict resolution. Definitely. Just thinking before I act. I used to always just act first. Now I understand that I do have a choice to think and make a good decision before just act out rationally and end up somewhere I don't want to be. Do something I would regret.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Significant Statements. Interpersonal skills. One of the most commonly cited skills participants believe will be useful upon reentry was effective communication which includes active listening and assertiveness. Respondent's cited rationalizations for need for new skills upon reentry. Responses such as "if I can just remember the conflict and the active listening and just remember that, um, I do have feelings and I can express myself better than being aggressive then I think I'm gonna, I really enjoy these tools" (P1), provide acknowledgement that if the participant can capitalize on what they learned in class and apply it appropriately upon release, they believe the skill will be useful. Assertive communication was also included as a component that was deemed helpful upon reentry to the community "I am an effective communicator and that I can be

assertive...and that it's important for me to keep myself in check and remember that ultimately I'm responsible for the way that I respond" (P8). Participant 12 reveals a different way in which assertiveness can be helpful, "Communication is the key because if to me I'm always one of them shy person that I won't ask if I need anything." Being able to state one's needs in an appropriate manner is a valuable skill, which can help avoid conflict.

Intrapersonal skills. Intrapersonal skills fall under the category of internal changes and include sub-themes such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and consequential thinking skills. Participant 2 identifies danger zones for those unable to recognize triggers, "I think that being able to identify certain triggers or um emotional emotions, I think that's really important because otherwise you end up in red zones." This skill lays a foundation for personal empowerment as stated by P7, "But through these skills – through positive thinking, self-awareness, through assertiveness I feel more prepared that when I get out I can be stronger." Finally, participant 11 sums up consequential thinking skills and impulse control in the following statement: "Conflict resolution. Definitely. Just thinking before I act. I used to always just act first. Now I understand that I do have a choice to think and make a good decision before just act out rationally [sic] and end up somewhere I don't want to be." This summary of question six demonstrates what participants believe to be skills and lessons that will be helpful upon reentry to the community. These sentiments also represent all of the theoretical perspective used in this study. Question seven addresses refinements suggested by participants.

Question #7. *What changes would you suggest to refine the ROPES program?*

Although this interview question was created for course refinement purposes, it allows access into the experience and meaning of participants. Incorporating this question targets central themes of agency and self-determination by eliciting the thoughts and opinions of participants. Responses to question seven indicate the uniqueness of ROPES within the corrections system by establishing a collective desire for more time, more classes, and more learning opportunities related to ROPES. Several respondents requested the course be lengthened, expanded, or a follow-up course be incorporated. These responses indicate satisfaction with course participation and signal a desire for supplementing the current curriculum.

Evaluative statements regarding the curriculum indicate an exceptional, self-improvement experience that instigated critical thinking about ways of being. Evaluative statements regarding the instructor indicate somewhat of a surprise for participants, some of whom enrolled to “get a certificate” only to encounter a pleasant experience. Positive behavior modeling impacted participants demonstrating an unanticipated level of humanity in unlikely place. Minds were changed and imprints were made through simple acts of positive modeling and respectful interactions.

Responses were plentiful and were divided into two broad categories titled “refinements” and “evaluative statements.” The “refinements” category was distributed into sub-themes including: 1) no change, 2) course expansion themes, 3) “more” themes, 4) curriculum pace and complexity, and 5) other. The “evaluative statements” category was distributed into three themes including: 1) curriculum, 2) instructor, and 3) other. For

a comprehensive view of participant's course refinement suggestions, please see Table 12 in Appendix D.

Significant Statements. Beginning with refinements, four respondents stated they believed no course changes were necessary. Course expansion included responses by five participants regarding making the course longer, incorporating more classes, or adding a follow-up or refresher course. Expansion was followed by themes of "more." All answers in this spectrum included suggestions for more of the various topics incorporated in the course. Examples include more follow-up on skills, the course be offered more often, and more instructor sharing. Subsequent to themes of "more" were suggestions on curriculum pace and complexity. Comments included participant's feeling rushed through the curriculum, not being given enough time for practice, meditation, and to discuss examples and actual conflicts. Also in this sub-theme, were suggestions to slow down, water down, or simplify the curriculum. The last sub-theme under refinements was titled "other" which included unique suggestions such as vetting participants, better course promotion, and incorporating a comparison class utilizing inmates and community members.

Evaluative statements split into three sub-themes as noted above. Comments concerning the "curriculum" included: impactful, flow, self-building, helpful, life-changing, and in-depth. Comments specific to the "instructor" included an unassuming disposition, different, respectful, and positive modeling. Comments under "other" pointed toward the lack of resources outside of jail to attain similar knowledge and feelings of

regret for time wasted prior to ROPES. Next is the final study question inviting participants to add any additional thoughts or comments.

Question #8. *Is there anything else you want to share about your experience in the ROPES course?*

Question eight prompted participants to add anything they felt may have been omitted in either questions or answers. Respondents provided abundant data in response to this question. In fact, this question had the second highest word count following question five. The last three questions averaged approximately 2,032 words combining all responses, whereas the first four questions averaged 1,334 words combining all responses. Asking the central question first (with an ultimate word count of 1687), in hindsight, may not have been well thought out. It could be that study participants needed more time, aside from demographic information, in order to feel comfortable providing answers.

Only inmates know the truth about the stunted environment within the jail walls. Social-emotional training may help alleviate an environment of arrested stimulation. As a researcher, the poignancy of responses to question eight resonates due to personal knowledge of the journey that brought them to this course and, ultimately, to this study. The journey began with choice and agency coupled with self-determination. The choice to take a risk, participate in the course, and improve self leads them toward change and ultimately, transformation. Responses to question eight reveals much about their ROPES journey.

Respondents indicated they experienced something “different” during the ROPES course that left them reformed. Two referred to the experience as “life-changing.” Others indicated ROPES granted a new perspective of self, enhanced confidence, and changed perceptions. Several felt compelled to share the experience either through skill application or through recommending the course. Self-perceptions were changed through practicing new communication skills, dealing with people more effectively, and discovering the value of listening to others. Giving of one’s self resides at the heart of most skills and experiences incorporated in ROPES as relationships are built through a giving process. Inmates, by nature, are more familiar with “taking” and, therefore, were surprised that giving can be so fulfilling. This simple, common humanity principle can’t be conveyed through lecture or discipline but is best learned through lived experiences.

The learned experience of forming relationships by giving to each other in a wholly considerate manner may help explain responses related to the instructor’s attributes. Descriptions of the instructor as “amazing, respectful, personable, of good humor, and caring” were offered. Participants noted that the instructor was professional, relatable, encouraging, and inspired class participation all making for “a great class environment.” Sentiments of respect, appreciation for the course, and acknowledgment of the dedication involved in delivering the curriculum were articulated. Underlying the sentiments are a deep sense of shared humanity rarely found in jail settings and it is this shared humanity that conveys the very nature of compassion as noted by Pema Chodron. It is shared humanity that participants yearn for as they work to better themselves through education, practice skills, and recommend worthwhile courses to others.

Several respondents expressed gratitude for the ability to participate in the course, acquiring helpful knowledge, class discussions, and the instructor's time and effort. ROPES participants mentioned boundary formation, risking, venturing outside of their comfort zone, trying something new, and respect for ROPES. Each of these varied ROPES components share a common feature in that they contribute toward extraordinary individual experience for participants. The holistic nature of the course provides the variety reflected in these responses. Expression of appreciation were unsolicited and emanated organically from a sense of honor and pleasure having participated in the course and represent a high and sincere level of praise. The ability to appreciate those things that change our humanity moves one from seeking to fulfill basic material and physical needs to fulfilling psychological needs such as belongingness and esteem.

Responses for question eight were divided into four categories, which included: 1) course impact, 2) expressions of gratitude, 3) general course comments, and 4) instructor attributes which were then sub-divided into "classroom management skills" and "interpersonal skills." Detailed explanation of responses can be found in Table 13 in Appendix D.

Significant Statements. Course impact. One of the first things to catch my attention under the theme of course impact was the reoccurring theme of causal sequencing. What stood out about causal sequencing was the ripple effect discussed as a result of this course, mentioned by four respondents. Causal sequencing was reflected in statements such as: "I just hope that maybe I can take some of these tools as well and take them back with me to my pod or even when I get out into the real world when I get there

and maybe I can share some of the ideas and things that I've learned and help others who are struggling with the same thing that I struggle with" (P1); "Yeah I really encourage, um, it to be all over, not just in this facility not just in this jail. But like, I would like to see ROPES course maybe go over to...the kids while they're younger so they don't end up being me" (P2); "I wish that more people would be hip to this class and come and just give it a shot" (P11); and "there's a not much you can do to put it in somebody's head but if you touch one person, ya know make a difference in their life, it's gonna make a difference in a lot of people's lives, man" (P15).

The next impactful sub-theme under course impact were comments stating the course was "life-changing" (P2) or "life-saving" (P11). Participant 11 indicated a crucial decision-making juncture, "I feel like it's more or less saved my life. I was at a point in my life where I had to choose to keep doing what I'm doing or try something different." This participant goes on to say they believe they are on "the right path" now. This is impactful for any program facilitator/creator. It would have been interesting to probe deeper to divulge specific components fostering these sentiments.

Other comments under course impact included, "It's opened my eyes to a better perspective", "now I'm more confident" and "I just know so much more about me and what I want" (P2). These responses indicate attaining a new perspective, more confidence, and enhanced self-awareness. Participant 9 offered the following: "...put myself in other people's shoes", "the only thing I think that's changed is my perception on how to deal with people," and "one of the things she was teaching us is how to deal with people." These responses indicate improved empathy, a changed perspective, and

developed social skills. Participant 13 speaks to being motivated by the course: “I see now it’s like rocket fuel for my little motivation to get out there and be the change because I didn’t kill nobody.” Even taking into consideration the mitigating caveat at the end of the statement, extrapolation from this comment indicates the participant has changed. Finally, participant 14 speaks to the effects of the course building trust and empathy “Things that we do as a group, ya know, that was the thing we used in a group was basically listen to each other’s, ya know, uh, their feelings of what they went through and stuff.”

Expressions of gratitude. Gratuitous comments were offered by five of the thirteen participants. Comments included: “Thank you for doing this, it made me feel a lot better” (P2); “Just I’m thankful” (P6); “I just sincerely appreciated getting to take the class” (P8); “I just thank Chris...for, um, just providing with the knowledge that I now have” (P12); and “I really appreciate the time you guys take to teach us these classes, ya know” (P15).

General course comments. Statements included in this section pertained to learning how to create boundaries, the course being both good and fun, trying something new to change destructive patterns, and taking the course seriously. Sentiments expressed by P10 speak of being outside of one’s comfort zone “Took us to the edge of discomfort sometimes helped us be able to get through it, ya know, what I mean that’s how it was so effective and her teaching, ya know what I mean, so like I said I liked the class a lot. It was fun.” The eclectic group of comments provided an alternate view of the course, aside

from attaining skills and knowledge and may also provide insight into why inmates choose to enroll.

Instructor attributes. The final litany of comments focused on instructor attributes and fell within two categories, which included “classroom management skills” and “interpersonal skills.” Classroom management skills revealed comments regarding instructor *competency* - “She knows what she’s doing” (P2); *professionalism* - “I especially appreciated the professionalism of the teacher” (P7); “I definitely appreciated the professionalism that Chris brought into her classroom” (P8); *participant inclusivity* - “She was tremendous at getting everyone to participate” (P7) and “I don’t know if it was something assigned to her or she chose to do the ROPES course but I mean they picked the perfect person to do it, I mean she kept us involved” (P10); *care* - “I could feel her genuine care and concern for me as well as for each other member of the class and I think that helped us to have a great class environment” and, *constructive feedback* - “she would give me more tips on how to improve it or make it better or make myself better” (P7).

Interpersonal skills. Question eight responses concluded with instructor’s interpersonal skills. Participant 7 indicated *engagement and encouragement*: “she was always genuinely interested in the comments of others as well” and “She addressed them or commented on them, encouraged them in their progress, um, always willing to give help and suggestions.” Participants 8 and 13 point to *positive modeling*, “I respect and also just appreciated how she’s just educated...but at the same time she didn’t place herself on a pedestal because of it” (P8) and “I hope she can be the voice for us...I hope

that she goes on and you go on to be the change like you wanna do” (P13). Participant 8 identified the instructor’s *goodness* in the statement: “I just have a lot of respect for Chris and the fact that she dedicates time to coming here and that she sees value in helping people in this type of a situation refine themselves and hopefully be a little better when they leave.” Another comment spoke of *influence*, “Um without her, I mean I wouldn’t be who I am today” (P12).

Positive criminology is embodied in many of the instructor-focused comments for question eight and incorporated in other questions as well. The table below relates some participant comments to elements of positive criminology, which was used as a working paradigm for delivering the ROPES curriculum. Positive criminology components encompass compassion, encouragement, faith, forgiveness, goodness, gratitude, humor, positive modeling, and spirituality.

Table 4

Positive Criminology Themes

P	Themes	Corresponding statements
P7	Positive modeling	If somebody had a comment or a question she would let them talk she wouldn’t cut people off she wouldn’t keep going and talk over others she was always genuinely interested in the comments of others as well.
P7	Encouragement	She didn’t dismiss them she addressed them or commented on them encouraged them in their progress um was always willing to give help and suggestions.
P8	Positive modeling	I respect and I also just appreciated how she’s just educated, she has a solid education, she’s working on a dissertation and I have a significant amount of respect for that but at the same time she didn’t place herself on a pedestal because of it
P8	Goodness	I just have a lot of respect for Chris and the fact that she dedicates time to coming here and that she sees value in helping people in this type of a situation refine themselves and

		hopefully be a little better when they leave.
P8	Humor	She brought good humor, she told stories and I loved that she demonstrated that she was human.
P12	Positive influence	Um without her, I mean I wouldn't be who I am today.
P13	Positive modeling	She wants to get her little Ph.D. and I hope she can be the voice for us because we need a unifying and voice for us...It was a pleasant experience and uh I hope that she goes on and you go on to be the change like change, like you wanna do.
P15	Spirituality	Like I said in the letter there's not much you can do to put it in somebody's head but if you touch one person, ya know, make a difference in their life, it's gonna make a difference in a lot of people's lives, man.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

The concepts in positive criminology described by ROPES participants speak specifically to relatedness, which is a component of self-determination theory as applied to corrections settings by authors Dani McKinney, Ph.D and Michael A. Cotronea. In their article *Using Self-Determination Theory in Correctional Education Development* (2011, p. 188) they stated “Research using self-determination theory indicates that when students in a course feel a level of competence, autonomy and relatedness, their ratings of the course (and the instructor) are higher.” The theme of relatedness is supported by positive criminology, restorative justice, and criminologists such as Shadd Maruna (2015), Natalie Hearn (2010), Ronel and Elisha (2010), Ralph C. Serin (2005), and James S. Vacca (2004).

Interpretation of the Findings

One feature resulting from the data was the prominence of inmate self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is demonstrated through the belief in the ability to affect change. Participants demonstrated self-efficacy through internal modifications and decisive

action. Participants provided examples of the skills they learned and, not only believed they could employ, but have employed inside the jail and with contacts and family outside of the jail. Without exception, Table 5 illustrates how each participant viewed themselves before entering the course and the changes they made as a result of the course. Several respondents voiced more than one example of change (P1, P2, P4, P11, P12, P15). Together, the collective responses help answer the central study question: What effect does holistic conflict resolution training have on inmate self-efficacy? This illustration shows that teaching holistic conflict resolution and communication skills to inmates produces self-efficacy in conflict resolution, which is beneficial for enhanced social-emotional processing resulting in enriched relationships. This is instrumental according to Byrne and Trew (2008), who posit weakened social bonds leave people free to engage in antisocial behavior creating pathways to crime. Self-perceptions before and after ROPES demonstrating self-efficacy are shown in table 4.5 below.

Table 5

Self-perceptions Pre- and Post-ROPES

P	Pre-ROPES	Post-ROPES
P1	<p>Before I took the ROPES course conflict I was just like ornery or really aggressive toward people and I would approach them really rudely and “rahr”...</p> <p>When I came to ROPES I was a mess.</p> <p>I’ve been to jail a lot. I didn’t think I had any hope of changing.</p> <p>I guess, been the aggressive one and even kinda like my children-rude and my</p>	<p>Then I took the ROPES class and I started to identify conflict like, um, physical signs were like weak and scared. Cognitive signs would be like red-faced and racing thoughts through my head.</p> <p>A possible benefit of conflict now is that it makes me a better person. So if I have conflict at all I can approach a person more like, um, assertive and I can go to them if I have a problem with them and I can do eye to eye contact and I’ve</p>

	husband-rude...	learned, still working on it, but not to interrupt people and I'm not perfect at it. That's what I got out of it. It's kind of changed my whole perspective on conflict.
P2	<p>I was passive-aggressive I would say and so because I had been beaten and have PTSD...</p> <p>I was a people pleaser...</p> <p>But it's mostly I would just internalize everything ya know it's not my fault ya know type of thing...</p>	<p>...it's just made me aware of who I am and why I act or behave the way I do.</p> <p>It's helped me express things better.</p> <p>I have more confidence now I know myself better than I used to and I can recognize different triggers or high-risk situations better.</p> <p>Um it changes lives. Like it's changed my life. Um, and the rippling effect on, um, healthy, um, interpersonal skills and things like that are, um, I think tremendous.</p>
P4	<p>I was really impulsive before the ROPES class.</p> <p>I used to get into conflict with my girlfriend.</p> <p>Previous to the ROPES course I just wouldn't, I just wasn't putting myself in her shoes as much as I should have...</p> <p>...mostly would just internalize everything, ya know, "it's not my fault" type of thing...</p>	<p>I've really learned to slow down and think before I react or speak or do anything, basically.</p> <p>I was really impulsive before the ROPES class and now it's... I'm getting along easier. I'm not stressed out. I'm not anxious.</p> <p>Previous to the ROPES course I just wouldn't, I just wasn't putting myself in her shoes as much as I should have and that's one of the things we learned in ROPES is to put our self in the other person's shoes.</p>
P6	<p>I'm like hardened up and don't really care that much or didn't care before...</p> <p>All I cared about was myself.</p>	<p>So now to understand when someone else is having problems communicating with me I choose to talk to them and figure out what the problem is and resolve it.</p> <p>I choose to pay more attention to people.</p>
P7	<p>...growing up having been critical of myself, um, as well as other people being highly critical of me I developed kind of a</p>	<p>I think the number one way that I have changed personally that's helped me to conflict better is my own self-awareness.</p>

	<p>perfectionistic, um, attitude, um, but not necessarily in a healthy sense. I was teased constantly and was unable to get out of the mindset, um, I would critique myself trying to just make myself better but ended up just tearing myself down a lot more.</p> <p>I used to be a big people pleaser and wanted to make sure that everybody is happy and that everybody liked me as much as I could...</p> <p>A lot of times I get highly critical of myself with it, get down on myself.</p>	<p>Being able to stand up for myself without making things, um, attacking or negative or critical of them in return just being able to stand up for myself. Talking positively um daily to build up the places where I was usually highly critical now more self-aware and pleased with myself but not so negative anymore. Um, more grateful for the things that I've been given. I look at things that I once considered as totally negative or wrong or ashamed of as opportunities for growth.</p> <p>Things that make me unique and that's a lot of the self-awareness training that we were able to receive.</p>
P8	<p>...I grew up in a way that kind of led me to be a passive-aggressive communicator.</p> <p>...I was kind of assimilating into an institutionalized mentality without even realizing it and without, ya know, consciously intending to...</p>	<p>I think it's reinforced and really helped me recognize the importance of self-reflection and um self-care.</p> <p>I realized that that was unnecessary and just because I'm in jail doesn't mean that, um, ya know I can't still have respectful, mutually beneficial conversations and agreements with people.</p>
P9	<p>...before I used to not think about things. I used to not really care. It's not that I didn't care but I didn't have too many other ways to deal with conflict that I agreed with...</p> <p>I usually swear or I'm a smart aleck.</p>	<p>I was given a few options and was able to use one of them that I agreed with. I still feel I'm moving forward even from the ROPES class. It just gave me a little bit more to use in the future.</p> <p>Like I said but I've been kind of biting my tongue on both of them.</p>
P10	<p>...for instance with the mother of my child if she doesn't show up for a visit, um, I automatically think the worst...</p> <p>I kind of need some things to keep things cool between me and the mother of my child.</p>	<p>Um just like for instance with the mother of my child if she doesn't show up to a visit, um, I automatically think the worst but it could be something as simple as she was late and if you're late they're not gonna give you the visit anyways so um just to kind of hear her out before I kinda</p>

		flipped out on her so...
P11	<p>Normally I'm really, really aggressive and I'm a fighter. Like my whole record is assaults...</p> <p>...I would probably have been to max already three times over...</p> <p>I used to always just act first.</p>	<p>I've learned a lot of things that I never knew before and I've used them in my daily life and I think they're helping. I think it's a wonderful class.</p> <p>I just don't feel as angry. I don't feel as violent.</p> <p>Now I understand that I do have a choice to think and make a good decision before just act out rationally and end up somewhere I don't want to be.</p>
P12	<p>I've been down for a little while now, almost a decade and ah, dang, whole time I've been down I was sitting with violence...</p> <p>...one of my biggest problems that I guess I'm notorious for is, I guess, authority. I always used to get in trouble for fighting with the cops...</p>	<p>But after doing this class, it's the longest I've been in population, a couple months, um, just yeah just being in this class learning how to be assertive, um, and how to talk instead of just, um, result to violence I guess I learned most from this class.</p> <p>I think a lot more before I talk and um before I do certain things. I started surrounding myself with people who are going to be a positive influence in my life... I had to cut ties with people that I love but they hold me down, they're not positive influences. Just being in this class taught me how. I mean, I thought I never was gonna be able to but I have and it was all because of this ROPES class.</p>
P13	<p>I didn't think I was doing anything wrong. I was justifying and enabling myself...</p>	<p>It helped me to like calm down and see both sides. Like how maybe I was coming off.</p> <p>I come into the situation or if I'm feeling like it's gonna be hostile then I try to calm down and I show respect</p>
P14	<p>...before I used to just like wanna go ahead and jump to the conclusion instead of finding out the situation or trying to dispute the conflict...</p>	<p>But after taking the class it made me realize that I could get more out of it, ya know, from the tools that I use, ya know, to de-escalates the, uh, situation.</p>

	Because they might say something out of the ordinary that will trigger or hit, ya know, a certain button within me that my whole attitude will change from positive to negative and throughout the whole day and stuff.	It's kind of common sense what you taught us but you really don't see it until somebody points it out, ya know.
P15	<p>...I was always the one trying to cause conflict, lol, ya know what I mean, but it's been a, it's been a long road for me to get to this point, ya know, cause I've been a gang member all my life.</p> <p>I was always a one-sided person, ya know, it was either how I wanted the outcome to be or no other way at all.</p> <p>I've taken life skills but it was just to get by and get over on the system.</p>	<p>This time I actually gave it up, ya know. So it's been kind of hard because I run into a lot of my old friends and that's a lot of conflict, man. Ya know. I'm still learning how to walk away from it but it helped me out a lot.</p> <p>It actually taught me to see the other person's point of view.</p> <p>This is the first time I've actually got something out of a class.</p>

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

In addition, participants used metaphors to describe some of the dynamics elicited as a result of the interview questions. Some of the metaphors used to describe ROPES experiences included learning to “put our self in the other person’s shoes” (P4, P10) which speaks to a new understanding of empathy; and “Brain food” (P13) which speaks to one of the fundamental human needs—stimulation (rational). Participants also used metaphors to describe their journey, including a “Long road” (P15); and “A temporary detour” (P8). Both of these metaphors describe a process leading out of crime, which has been a theme throughout this study. Finally, one participant used a metaphor to describe accepting differences in society, “everybody walks a different path in life” (P10). This metaphor of understanding creates space for accepting others who are different.

The essence of ROPES

The experience of being shackled signals an inmate's formal incarceration process. Although shackles are typically placed around the wrists and ankles, shackles symbolically transcend physical containment. The symbolic representation can restrain autonomy, suppress aspirations, restrict freedom, limit access to material goods and services, represent a loss of control, distort personal identity, deny privacy, and relinquish power over daily activities such as eating, showering, and unrestricted access to friends and family. Support, emotional feedback, positive social stimulation, and activities are minimized adding to the stress of incarceration. Symbolic shackles affect the way one views their relationship with the world. In her book, *Presence* (2015), Amy Cuddy uses shackles as a metaphor for powerlessness.

From the moment the shackles are fastened inmates must choose to either work to be released from the physical and mental constraints of the chains or acquiesce to their fate, which can lead to living in anger, rage, and thoughts of revenge and regret. One way inmates seek to loosen the burden of the chains and experience relief from internal turmoil is through participating in programming such as ROPES. This step toward change is viewed as productive use of down time and even defiance toward the labels placed on them by society, each other, and their selves. However, some inmates can look past these judgments and perceptions to imagine what they can become.

Although physical release is controlled by either the county, state, or federal system, the unshackling of the psyche takes place by choice and includes active participation on the part of the individual. This choice represents turning from known

ways of relating to the world (fighting, contending, and conflict) and exploring alternatives to produce better outcomes. Examining the core self in identity formation begins with acknowledgment of the constraints and accepting the need for change. Enrolling in ROPES signals willingness to try new solutions to ongoing problems.

New thinking and skills are parlayed into self-efficacy through interpersonal skill execution. ROPES participants are further empowered by the development of skills such as assertiveness, problem-solving, impulse control, and consequential thinking. This empowerment serves to loosen the symbolic shackles placed on them by society and their selves and induces new thinking including preparing for the future, gaining positivity, and a posture of gratitude.

ROPES participants also begin a unique process of intrapersonal awareness as they gain knowledge about themselves and their behaviors. This process allows participants to view themselves authentically in an effort to better understand their mind, emotions, impulses, and reactions which allows them to begin viewing their past in a new light. Some aspects of identity awareness are painful but making the journey along with like-minded peers seems to make the process more palatable. Now, as opposed to viewing their self as wholly broken individuals they begin to identify within themselves personal strengths and positive characteristics they had not previously considered such as resiliency and perseverance.

At times the experience of ROPES acts as a reprieve from the hopelessness, monotony, and negativity back in the section. As the course progresses, the experience becomes “impactful” and “self-building.” It is a rare experience inside jail for “non-

judgmental” sharing. Learning to connect with others is central to ROPES. Bonding takes place throughout the experience that participants describe in a continuum ranging from “helpful” to “life-changing.” The experience is enriched through an environment of engagement and inclusivity, combined with an atmosphere of “genuine care,” “genuine interest,” “encouragement,” and mutual “trust.” It leaves participants with a longing for “more” as well as a regret for “time wasted”—thinking back to a time before ROPES. ROPES produces a desire to “pass on what was learned [to others],” and a “rippling effect” along with a hope that others will opt to participate, given the opportunity.

ROPE transcends shackles and allows participants to imagine beyond the label of “inmate” to the possibility of a new identity instigated intentionally by the motivation to achieve better outcomes. Resilience is demonstrated through this intentional relinquishing of labels and the determination to attempt new skills, participate in difficult, self-awareness exercises, and in the vulnerability that accompanies taking risks and being different. As sessions progress, participants return to class with stories of effective skill application and ineffective attempts. As a result of open sharing they begin to empathize with each other which leads to bond as a group. The bonding can also be attributed to a unique sense of resilience represented through time spent together in the classroom “trying something new,” and being coaxed “outside of their comfort zone. Hope is illuminated as participants acquire and practice new skills to use upon reentry to the community. Participation in programming fundamentally demonstrates hope through anticipation for different future outcomes. Hope is stamped on every new skill attempt

and every session attended. Hope for other inmates is extended through knowledge sharing and encouragement to attend the course.

Change as a result of ROPES becomes evident through an altered view of self, including self-narratives. As stated above, a deep sense of shared humanity rarely found in jail settings is sensed in participant responses. It is shared humanity that participants yearn for as they work to better themselves through education and skill practice.

Throughout the process, a spiral is created as one's narrative changes prompting a change in identity which evolves into relationships being changed. As such, ROPES provides an opportunity for redemption among family and peers through skill development and self-efficacy. As self-efficacy develops, empowerment ensues and transformation is encouraged. If shackles (powerlessness) signals a need for change, then unshackling (empowerment) opens doors to change. Transformation begins when hearts and minds are unrestrained.

This process can be compared to the burning of a candle. The candle is exposed to a catalyst which initiates a change process. For a period of time a candle is lit and gives light. This represents empowerment. Whether the change is significant or minute, the glow of the light has left a permanent mark on the wick. This mark resembles change, growth, or transformation seared into the essential nature of the candle. At this point, the candle can never go back to its original state. Whether the fire continues to burn brightly or has been snuffed out by circumstances, discouragement, or other distractions, the mark is permanent. As such, ROPES leaves its mark on the hearts and minds of participants. This permanent mark represents internal transformation.

Themes. Several common themes were developed through data analysis and are expounded in Table 6 below. Textural themes included choice, resource procurement, skill development/knowledge attainment, self-efficacy. The process of choice associated with the experience of ROPES begins with the choice to enroll in the course. Throughout the course, participants are challenged to consider new conflict resolution options, thereby diverting from historical patterns that have yielded undesirable consequences and results. It also entails the ability to consider alternatives to violence and seek healthier peers. Resource procurement speaks to the act of striving for self-improvement, seeking new skills, and attempting to create a new sense of self. Skill development and knowledge attainment encompasses all of the skills learned and practiced during the course. The skills mentioned most prevalently include assertiveness, empathy, and self-awareness. The experience culminates in self-efficacy as participants practice using skills during family visits and phone conversations and with the peers in the section. Self-efficacy also includes a new awareness of negative influences, non-violent options for conflict resolution, and belief in a personal ability to apply various skills to achieve desired outcomes. Finally, we see efficacy extended beyond self through a willingness to share skills and knowledge by working with others.

Structural themes include agency, resilience, hope, and change/empowerment. Agency or the ability to act intentionally and reflectively is evident through self-knowledge indicating the need for change. Closely following is the seeking out of programming that will help achieve desired outcomes. Resilience is distinguished through working toward new perspectives of resolution such as engaging in difficult

conversations, attempting new skills, using assertive language, and considering non-violent conflict resolution options. Resilience is also exhibited through rejection of stereotypical inmate labels, willingness to leave comfort zones, taking risks, and being different from other inmates or even family members. Themes of hope are exposed through preparation for reentry to the community and acquiring skills which will help facilitate reentry. Hope for different outcomes, exhibited through skill attainment, is not limited to self but extends to others that they may also strive for change.

Finally, change and empowerment themes are evident in the data. Change themes were evident and included changes in perspectives of conflict, views on violence, personal narratives, and perspectives and views of self and others. Participants saw changes in skill levels, changes in the relationships with other participants and the instructor, and a changed perspective on prison learning environments. Finally, they experienced changes in cognitive awareness and their ability to alter negative perceptions. Empowerment themes include enhanced communication skills, new options for dealing with conflict, enhanced personal narratives, and pro-social modeling. Empowerment was also experienced through actively striving for self-improvement, achieving a level of success and knowing they achieved what they set out to achieve. As a result, participants are imbued with a desire to work with or help others, new levels of respect and genuine acceptance, and a sense of redemption.

Table 6

Textural and Structural Themes

Themes	Derivative Meanings
<i>TEXTURAL</i>	
Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolling, participating, and working toward change • Considering conflict resolution options • Choosing behaviors and consequences • Learning and using alternatives to violence and impulsiveness • Seeking out healthier people and alternatives
Resource Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striving for self-improvement • Seeking out new skills • Moving toward a new reality
Skill Development/ Knowledge attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening skills • Expressing feelings in a safe environment • Impulse control, consequential thinking skills • Empathy development • Self-awareness • Emotional regulation • Gratitude • Mindfulness • Assertiveness • Cognitive restructuring
Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict resolution skill implementation with peers and family • Implementing consequential thinking and impulse control contributing toward non-violent conflict resolution • Being mindful of negative influences • Belief in the ability to apply skills to achieve better outcomes • Willingness to share skills and knowledge • Ability to work with others • Providing something of value to others (listening, empathy, etc.)
<i>STRUCTURAL</i>	
Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self-knowledge including acknowledgment that change is needed • Seeking programming to help achieve desired outcomes
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempting new skills and experiencing accompanying awkwardness

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up for oneself in an assertive manner • Participating in difficult conversations to resolve conflict • Rejecting “inmate” labels • Leaving comfort zone • Considering non-violent conflict resolution options • Awareness of areas for personal improvement • Being different • Taking a risk
Hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for returning to the community • Acquiring new skills for use upon reentry • Hope for different outcomes • Hope others with participate and change
Change/Empowerment	<p>CHANGES INCLUDE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspectives of conflict • Reverting from violence to non-violence • Personal narrative • Perspective of others, self-perceptions • Skill levels • Relationships with other class members, instructor • Level of appreciation • Perspective on participant/instructor relationship • Concept about how others (teacher/other participants) view me • Perspective on prison learning environment • Cognitive awareness/alter negative perceptions <p>EMPOWERMENT INCLUDES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared humanity • Enhanced communication skills • Options for dealing with conflict • Enhanced identity/personal narrative • Pro-social modeling • Active participation toward self-improvement • Desire to help others • Level of respect and genuine acceptance (instructor/self/other participants) • Opportunity for redemption

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Albert Bandura (1977, p. 193) described self-efficacy as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes.” Self-efficacy, change, and empowerment are represented throughout the data in the narratives of participants. This self-efficacy process, described through a phenomenological lens is demonstrated through the *ROPES Self-Efficacy Development Model* shown below.

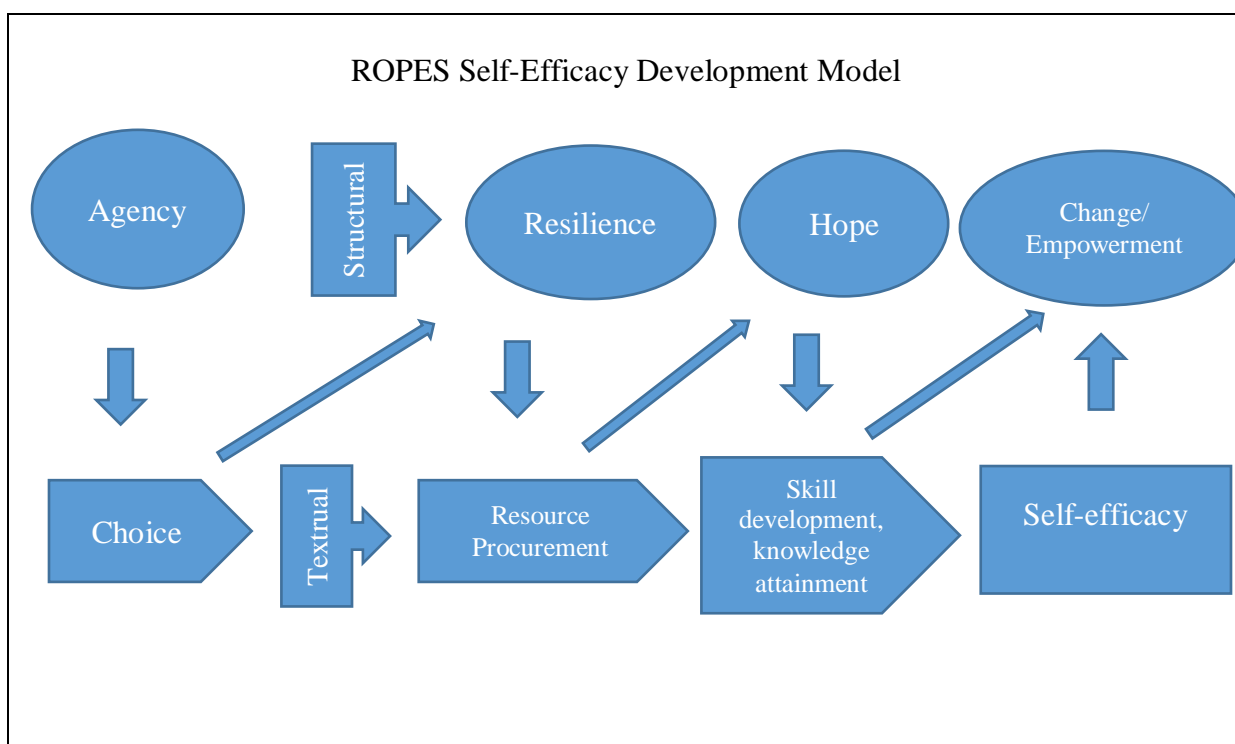


Figure 1. ROPES self-efficacy development model

In this context, change is instrumental for forming a new identity, a new narrative, and moving toward desistance. Having sunk to epic lows and cast with the label of “inmate” or “felon” relegates them to daily reinforcement of past mistakes and pits them on the wrong side of good versus bad and even us or them. It is in this place, devoid of life’s daily conveniences and deprived of individuality, where the motivation to seek change lies. Some are prompted to change by the very societal label placed on them,

however, only a small portion of this population will pursue opportunities to alter their criminological identity. At the heart of this process, for those that do, is a longing for acceptance and belonging. Aside from punishment of the physical self, rehabilitation is a holistic process encompassing the heart and mind.

The current criminal justice system excels at controlling the physicality of corrections clients through imprisonment, detainment, and electronic monitoring. Yet the hearts and minds remain free to roam and are potentially more dangerous. Therefore, they, too, must be included as targets for transformation in inmate rehabilitation. The current system is set up in a way which largely ignores the hearts and minds as points of development. In addition, it may inadvertently serve to degenerate hearts and minds of incarcerated through rituals of degradation and de-identification. The truth is that 93% of inmates will be released from jail and absent changes of hearts and minds, the body will tend to do what it has always done.

ROPES targets hearts and minds through the curriculum, which includes empathy, emotional intelligence skills, social construction theory, restorative justice, and through positive criminology concepts of compassion, encouragement, faith, forgiveness, goodness, gratitude, humor, positive modeling, and spirituality. Restorative justice advocates for offenders to recognize the impact of their behavior on those around them, strengthening oneself through safe relationships, move toward inner peace and freedom, and create a strong inner identity, serving to target hearts and minds and foster inclusiveness and accountability. ROPES incorporates the use of circle processes in course curriculum as a means for structured and sensitive dialogue. Inmate responses

regarding the circle experience indicate they were affected through the process of bonding and empathy creating a pro-social sense of community.

The difference between affecting participant's thoughts and feelings versus affecting their hearts and minds includes the awareness that a thought is a cognitive awareness of stimuli and a feeling is a physical reaction or state as a result of stimuli. Therefore, affecting thoughts and feelings can be both brief and fleeting. Whereas when the heart is affected so has a deep and integral part of the core self. Likewise, the mind is much more than the brain. The mind is the representation of our consciousness. Affecting hearts and minds touches a deeper, more permanent level of one's being. Participants in this study recognized and appreciated aspects of ROPES that influence hearts and minds as illustrated through the following responses:

Table 7

Affecting Hearts and Minds

P	Hearts
P1	Maybe I can share some of the ideas and things that I've learned and help others who are struggling with the same thing that I struggle with.
P2	Um, it changes lives. Like it's changed my life.
P4	I'm more focused on like actually changing not just surface changing and I think that comes with ROPES and every other class I'm taking in here.
P14	That's one thing I like about the circle. The trust, ya know. And it's really, it's hard so what I learned from that program was basically how to be more open and listen to other, ya know, people's feelings and stuff.
P15	Like I said in the letter there's a not much you can do to put it in somebody's head but if you touch one person, ya know, make a difference in their life, it's

	gonna make a difference in a lot of people's lives, man.
P	Minds
P1	Self-talk is the biggest one I've learned and how to change negative feelings into something positive.
P4	I'm getting along easier. I'm not stressed out. I'm not anxious.
P7	A lot of conflict can bring us down, um, and having tools and keys that can help you remind yourself who you are, what you like to get back into a positive state of mind can keep you from being in a negative place that promotes reacting.
P8	I think it's reinforced and really helped me recognize the importance of self-reflection and um self-care.
P9	Um, the only thing I think that's changed is my perception on how I deal with people.
P13	And so taking this class was where my mind's at right now, it's like mmm brain food I guess. Like when we focus on...I can't remember which group but it's like in the book the where I read you wanna be on love channels. Or you wanna think positive, be positive, you are positive
P14	Now that I see things in a very positive and open perspective that, ya know, if you got something to say, say it, ya know.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Summary

Chapter four extends the study into the settings and demographics of the of the facility and participants, which provides some insight into conducting research in a jail. Data collection methods are described as well as the data analysis methodology. Factors of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are discussed as they apply to the study. Results from the data revealed that in the textural context of skill

development, knowledge attainment, and enhanced personal awareness, self-efficacy in conflict resolution ensues. These factors are combined to create the structural effects of resilience, hope, and change catalyst. Theoretical implications compliment the outcomes including the employment of positive criminology tenets and the positive effects resulting from the use of this compassionate, social-emotional model. Finally, the data are assessed for implications and a thick description of the essence of ROPES. The final chapter will provide an interpretation of the findings, study limitations, recommendations, and implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

“If you touch just one person in your lifetime and show you care, providing hope and meaning, you have lived a life of purpose worth living.” James Guy (as cited by Lagana & Lagana, 2009, p. 209)

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe participant’s perceptions of conflict resolution following the ROPES course in an effort to add to the body of research contributing toward effective inmate programming. The central research question for this study is: What effect does holistic conflict resolution training have on inmate self-efficacy?

Chapter one reveals alarming facts about the inmate population in America, the cost of this incarceration dilemma, and research indicating that inmate education is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention (Banse, Koppee-Gossel, Kistemaker, Werber, & Schmidt, 2013; Choate & Normore, 2013; Layton-MacKenzie, 2008; Ronel & Elisha, 2011; Ubah & Robinson, 2003; Vacca, 2004).

An inability to deal with conflict and the ensuing emotions in an appropriate manner is a central theme in the lives of many incarcerates who lack problem-solving, communication, and consequential thinking skills. High school is a crucial time for moral, social, and psychological development and coincides with the time in a youth’s life when they are most likely to participate in criminal behavior according to Arum and Beattie (1999). As stated earlier, 41% of state inmates and 26% of federal inmates do not have a high school degree. Furthermore, nine of the thirteen of respondents in this study

did not graduate from a traditional high school. These facts lead to the conclusion indicating a need to fill in socio-emotional gaps as well as new and innovative inmate education and rehabilitation.

Recidivism rates indicate that two out of every three inmates that are released are rearrested and one out of two will return to prison within three years of being released (Wexler, Lurigio, & Rodriguez, 2011). Unless inmates experience a degree of transformation (Layton-MacKenzie, 2008) they are destined to end up back in jail. In their article *Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation* (2002), Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, describe a link between cognitive and behavioral change among offenders and correlate them with the process of transformation. Transformation and rehabilitation are integrally linked and characterize the heart of this research study which is to equip inmates with pro-social competency skills to help change behaviors that led to incarceration in the first place.

Discussion

The ROPES curriculum incorporates perspectives of agency and self-determination prominent in the literature review and common in restorative justice practices. Agentic thinking is described as the capacity to use one's pathways to reach desired goals by Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2005). Self-determination theory studies reveal that course participants who feel a level of competence, autonomy, and relatedness rate the course and the instructor higher (2011). The authors attribute these outcomes to the participant's ability to finish the course, the option of choice in education, and rapport between the participant and the instructor. For the purpose of the ROPES course, the

concept of self-determination refers to the party's choice to participate in programming at an individual comfort level, to choose the skills they employ, and the connections that form throughout the course.

Conditions in jail do not always reflect healthy interaction patterns. In addition to meting out retribution, moral obligation renders that we incorporate demonstrations of correct interaction and behavior patterns. This includes modeling how to treat others, how to work through conflict, and the skills that contribute something of value to balanced relationships. A wise system not only provides instruction and examples of how not to act but should demonstrate proper ways of interacting, thereby amplifying the likelihood of changed behavior upon reentry.

In the same vein, we know people cannot be forced to make internal changes. What is less obvious is what is needed to affect internal change. Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) describe agency associated with intentional and reflective actions and cognitive shifts that precipitate transformation as the actor begins to organize their world setting up the possibility for change. Potentially, prosocial features of the environment can be referred as catalysts for change, which is referred to as "hooks for change." They are referred to as hooks due to the actor's own role in choosing opportunities within the given environment and the narrative the actor engages in throughout the process.

Based on this study, I posit that knowledge and skills can be considered hooks for change, which are crucial to affect internal transformation. The narrative the actor engages in throughout the process is another key to internal transformation. Numerous

examples of self-narrative have been shown as a result of the data presented here. In addition, I posit the rapport between participant and provider is significant as noted by P9, “I believe some of us are just not here to learn, ya know what I mean? But then again, like I said, I didn’t come in here thinking I wanted to learn anything either but when you meet somebody that treats you with respect you wanna treat them with respect and at least hear them out. And I heard her out.”

The positive effects of rapport-based influences were confirmed in participant narratives in this study and through research on the positive effects of rapport-based corrections practices. It appears that socio-emotional skills training is effective and enhanced when delivered within an environment of inclusion and acceptance rather than judgment and castigation. Maruna (2015, p. 327) notes:

When treatment is understood as just another relationship between people, the distinction between receiving an intervention and not receiving an intervention...may be less important than understanding the quality of the actual relationship, processes, and pathways that desisting person’s experience.

Maruna emphasizes the focus shift from what is delivered to inmates by way of education versus a relation-based learning experience leading them out of a life of crime as significant.

Effective programming is described by James S. Vacca (2004) as education that help prisoners with social skills, artistic development, and techniques to deal with their emotions (p. 297). He also stated that effective programming should reduce recidivism and lead to a better environment within the prison. He indicated that inmates are more

likely to attend classes that will help them upon reentry into the community. ROPES fits the criteria of effective programming as put forth by Vacca (2004) through social skills training and instruction on how to deal appropriately with emotions.

Doris Layton MacKenzie (2000) advocates for inmate education that focuses on changing inmate thoughts and attitudes including thinking errors, problem solving, coping skills, and impulsivity. In addition, Layton MacKenzie (2008) posits increased social skills are associated with higher employability and she advocates for effective correction practices that demonstrate positive relationships between the instructors and participants and are skill-oriented, cognitive behavioral, and multimodal. According to Layton MacKenzie's descriptions, ROPES falls into the category the effective correction practices.

The findings indicate that training inmates in conflict resolution and communications skills such as active listening, emotional intelligence, empathy, impulse control, and assertiveness does affect self-efficacy in conflict resolution and foster change. As demonstrated in chapter four, the process begins with agency and self-determination of the actor, which is a pathway to goal attainment. This act embodies resilience and a willful refusal to embrace a criminal identity, instead seeking out available resources. The behavior provides hope for a better future, motivating the actor towards skill development and knowledge attainment. Skill development and knowledge attainment lead to enhanced personal awareness and enhanced interpersonal relationships, demonstrating self-efficacy and change. Furthermore, teaching these skills and concepts

with theoretical lenses such as positive criminology and positive modeling enhances the experience creating a longed for sense of pro-social community.

The decision to change, particularly when the purpose is clear to the actor, is demonstrated by P7, “We set a lot of goals for ourselves to be able to develop skills to handle those things appropriately knowing that a lot of conflict skills, conflict resolution skills don’t come naturally. We want to react impulsively. We want to react emotionally. So it takes practice to develop those types of skills.” Without exception, Table 4.5, located in chapter 4, illustrates how each participant viewed themselves before entering the course, contrasted by the changes they have made as a result of the course. Several respondents voiced more than one example of change (P1, P2, P4, P11, P12, P15). This demonstrates that holistic conflict resolution training effects self-efficacy. This is beneficial for enhanced social-emotional processing resulting in enriched relationships which is essential for moving toward desistance according to Byrne and Trew (2008), who posit weakened social bonds leave people free to engage in antisocial behavior creating pathways to crime.

If perceptions and attitudes about a person or situation can be augmented or changed, the possibility for resolution increases. The ROPES course teaches participants to examine perceptions about self and others in an effort to determine their validity. Pruitt and Kim (2004) state “Some psychological changes involve emotions or emotionally related perceptions” (p. 102). Perceptions are precursors to emotions. Emotions and their resulting behaviors are at the heart of the ROPES training. ROPES was founded on the

premise that learning to process emotions in a productive manner will promote conflict resolution.

Reducing recidivism and promoting desistance is complicated. This study has addressed several factors that are involved in rehabilitation. Some factors include high school involvement, the role of agency and self-determination, effective programming, social-emotional skills training, rapport-based inmate education, narrative design, internal transformation, and perceptions and emotions. This is not a comprehensive list of rehabilitative factors. What we do know is if pervasive conflict and lack of problem-solving skills led participants toward a life of crime, then access to and attainment of new social skills and pro-social bonding experiences provide the impetus leading out.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical frameworks chosen were well established in the study through the responses of the participants as indicated in chapter four. Using a multi-theoretical perspective, although risky, provided an eclectic range to work within. Each theory provided insight into the entrenched conflict inherent in this population as well as suggestions for reversing this trend. All of the frameworks contributed toward identity building. ROPES participants described creating the foundation of a new identity through skill building, knowledge acquisition, positive experiences, and new self-narratives. Human needs theory was demonstrated primarily through themes of identity, esteem, and meaning. Social construction theory proved instrumental through the use of words to create identity and for the sharing of emotions. Appreciative inquiry was detected through positive affect and capitalizing on strengths to effect change. Hope theory was

central and conceptualized as hope for a better future. Restorative justice concepts of empowerment, self-improvement, listening more, and talking less were demonstrated through the application of various skills.

Participant perceptions illustrate various theoretical concepts beginning with human needs theory and aspects of ROPES that contributed to wholeness in areas of identity, esteem, stimulation, peace, and security. Participant 10 speaks to identity and peace and a willingness to understand differing personalities in the statement “I mean everybody walks a different path in life so you can’t expect everybody to have the same views as you do ...It’s like I said it opened up more avenues to be able to communicate with different people.”

Hope theory also proved pivotal. Martin & Stermac’s (2010) research demonstrates that lower levels of hope correlates with greater risk for involvement in illegal behavior, higher risk for recidivism, particularly in the presence of lowered agentic thinking. This finding showed hope as well as agentic thinking as protective factors resulting in less risk and enhancing strengths, supporting positive changes in the future.

Statements associated with hope theory speak to the possibility of successful reentry into the community and the prospects for a better future as demonstrated by P1 “I think it’s [ROPES tools] gonna help me a lot when I get out there especially because everything is going to hit me at once.” Using pathways thinking in the pursuit of goals combined with affirming internal messages is displayed by P2, “Like with the positive self-talk stuff like cause we adopt these negative core beliefs or core concepts that we adopt them throughout our life and through our conditioning our parents, our siblings, our

environment, our peers things like that, um, and I realize now that just because somebody says something doesn't mean I have to take it. It's not mine ya know and it doesn't make it law."

Social construction theory speaks to creating reality through our words, which, for this population, includes creating a new, non-offending identity. In the purest form every statement made in interviews symbolizes social construction theory as all words formulate our reality. On a pragmatic level, themes associated with this theory included self-awareness, self-narrative, and emotional competence. The narrative of P6 illustrates both self-awareness and empathy in personal relationships before and after participating in the ROPES course "Just understanding what a problem is. I don't know. I used to not really. All I cared about was myself. So now to understand when someone else is having problems communicating with me I choose to talk to them and figure out what the problem is and resolve it." This response demonstrates the value participants have found as the one giving in the relationship as opposed to getting, thus exhibiting philosophical principles of relationship building.

Utilizing strength-based, solution-focused praxis along with positive affect and social bonds to create momentum for change are central notions in appreciative inquiry and illustrated through inmate's responses regarding positivity and associating with positive influences. Statements supporting the incorporation of appreciative inquiry practices were issued by P7 "A lot of the personal changes that I just mentioned, um, specifically, I have a small list of self-affirmation/positive thinking thoughts that I repeat to myself daily" and P12 "It's kind of hard but I finally decided just to put her as part of

my past. My past is what was ruining my life.” These statements demonstrate strong examples of making positive changes.

Lois Presser’s (2009) conceptualization of narrative criminology reiterates that we live by the stories we tell. She describes *narrative criminology* as a fledgeling concept in criminology which coincides with Shadd Maruna’s research on the narrative effects on crime and the plot devices involved. Both authors posit that change in agency contributes toward empowerment in the desistance narrative and can also help in the desistance process. Similarly, Roman Altshuler’s article, *Free will, narrative, and retroactive self-constitution*, states, “our self-narration allows us to reason about how to act” (p. 871). He states that using verbal persuasion we can change the meaning of things within the narrative by changing the narrative. Finally, Sam King (2013) makes a connection between self-narrative and desistance. King identified the role of narrative in helping to create a new, law-abiding identity. Existing literature supports the usefulness of this narrative-based transformation from offender to non-offender as paramount in the desistance process.

This trail of thought combines theoretical concepts of identity and meaning from human needs theory with creating reality using our words from social construction theory while capitalizing on strengths and positive affect to effect change from appreciative inquiry. Narrative, then, as demonstrated throughout the ages through classic works such as *Pride and Prejudice* and contemporary forums such as Ted Talks demonstrate the historical power words have on an audience. Narrative allows us to relive the past and holds no restrictions on our creation of the future. From this perspective, interview data

can be viewed as the foundation of each participant's desistance narrative. The new narrative begins to imagine an identity fortified with new communication skills, knowledge, and hope that utilization of the acquired knowledge can formulate a better future.

Restorative justice advocates for offenders to recognize the impact of their behavior on those around them, strengthening oneself through safe relationships, move toward inner peace and freedom, and create a strong inner identity, serving to target hearts and minds and foster inclusiveness and accountability. ROPES incorporates the use of circle processes in course curriculum as a means for structured and sensitive dialogue. Inmate responses regarding the circle experience indicate they were affected through the process of bonding and empathy creating a pro-social sense of community.

Finally, restorative justice principles of accountability and inclusiveness are encased in comments about impulse awareness and offender inclusiveness. Participants expressed a new-found awareness related to actions and behaviors and their effect on those around them as illustrated by P11 "Just thinking before I act. I used to always just act first. Now I understand that I do have a choice to think and make a good decision before just act out rationally [sic] and end up somewhere I don't want to be" and non-violence as shown by P12 "just being in this class learning how to be assertive um and how to talk instead of um result to violence I guess I learned most from this class." As stated previously, a clear association is made between the theories utilized in this study and participant's experiences. A synopsis of theoretical perspectives exhibited in the study responses is illustrated in Table 14 in appendix D.

Limitations of the Study

Study limitations included the lack of access to prior ROPES participants. A fundamental limitation inherent in corrections education and research includes the nebulous nature of inmate movement within the incarceration system. In addition, limited ability for streamlined procedures due to the restricted jail environment created bulky functionality which ultimately worked but proved time intensive. Examples include third party (jail program coordinator) notification of all meetings and interviews, lack of readily accessible resources such as copy machines, and inconsistent and unreliable communication chains. An example of unreliable communication includes the chronicles of an inmate who agreed to participate in the study but did not show at the time of his scheduled interview appointment. The research assistant was informed by the guard that the participant had chosen to withdraw from the study. Five months later, the participant reenrolled in the ROPES course. He signed up so he could let me know he was unable to participate in the study due to illness. Another limiting factor associated with this study was using a singular form of data. Finally, the inability to confirm results with participants for reasons rehearsed above, limits interpretations to the researcher's perspective.

Recommendations

A natural next step in researching the ROPES course includes gather more data, including quantitative data, along with grouping or narrowing the scope of focus in order to filter course strengths and weaknesses. In addition, further research on relation-based correctional education specific to conflict resolution training is needed to add to this body

of work. The criminal justice system is ripe for conflict resolution training and education. In addition to training inmates in conflict resolution skills, staff and guards who may possess proficient conflict resolution skills could benefit from emotional intelligence training which is flourishing throughout corporate America and helps reduce stress on the job. Training staff in emotional intelligence, listening, and cognitive restructuring could help change perspectives, reduce conflict, and provide support for inmates in training.

The study provides insight into an urgent need for communication and conflict resolution training among corrections clients. One recommendation is to expand this type of training and extend it to probationers and parolees. The format explained in this study worked for me as a provider but experimenting with conflict resolution topics might yield interesting outcomes. Conflict resolution training appears imperative, under-delivered, and in-step with vocational and tertiary education.

Conflict resolution practitioners willing to work with an inmate population should remain open-minded. In addition to providing conflict resolution skills they should consider their participants to be as capable as any audience on the outside with some exceptions. Adopting a working paradigm such as positive criminology which helps guide interactions under stressful conditions is advisable. Incorporating different facilities and facilitators would lead to increased confirmability and transferability. Another suggestion includes incorporating structural corroboration by using multiple types of data such as participant behavior analysis following ROPES to support or contradict effectiveness. In addition, it would be interesting to conduct long-term/desistance studies

on ROPES graduates. Finally, it may prove helpful to adopt the recommendations of study participants who advocated for augmented training and assess their effects.

Implications

Criminological knowledge and research is heavily quantitative-based. Shadd Maruna (2015, p. 317) calls this “institutionalized quantitivism.” Qualitative research has found footing recently as the incarcerated population crests at epic proportion. For this reason, a variety of solutions, previously considered lacking, are being sought and considered. Maruna reminds us that “what works” and “evidence-based” models are molded from the medical community and states that qualitative research is mostly screened out as insignificant within this model because it tends to address issues of process as opposed to cause and effect. He argues that “what works” needs to include qualitative data to enhance, define, and fill in gaps in knowledge. This qualitative study contributes toward research demonstrating that relationships matter in corrections training. Further, a correlation can be made to data in the study and assertions by Arum and Beattie (1999) that incarcerated populations suffer from a lack of socio-emotional skills. This sample, although small, indicated only thirty percent of participants graduated from a traditional high school the lack of which, they say, can impact moral, social, and psychological development (Arum and Beattie, 1999). This is also demonstrated through the narrative of study participants as declared by P14, “I just never had the knowledge or the resource to go out there and look for that kind of stuff.”

Positive social change emanating from this study includes the incorporation of additional holistic conflict resolution and communication skills training courses utilizing

characteristics discussed above at the county, state, and federal levels. In addition, I advocate for training corrections personnel and peripheral staff in techniques that promote positive engagement. Using ingenuity and community resource may alleviate budget hardships caused by these recommendations. Additionally, research shows that effective programming is one of the best forms of recidivism reduction, further opening the field to providers interested in teaching conflict resolution and social skills.

A new model of working with corrections clients was called for as far back as 2002 when Lawrence Sherman, then president of the American Society of Criminology, acknowledged the failure of the punitive approach to criminal justice. He advocated for an emotionally intelligent criminal justice system, which would promote awareness of the system's emotions, recognize emotions of both victims and offenders, and competently manage emotions within the system, which would include paradigms such as restorative justice and positive criminology. Submitting this dissertation shortly after twelve officers were ambushed and shot in Dallas, Texas and live-streamed video of men being killed by officers around the nation is excruciating.

Theorists and practitioners such as Lawrence Sherman (2002) and Tom R. Tyler (2006) point to a corrections reality supported by research that cannot be ignored in the wake of circumstances presently occurring across the country. Theorists pointed out that people will obey laws when they view the criminal justice system as acting justly (Sherman, 2002). Sherman underscored this in his assertion, "Understanding how to avoid provoking such emotions as defiance, anger, and humiliation may be more

important than understanding how to instill a desire to obey the law” (p. 4). He goes on to say that in addition to being less punitive it is time to be more innovative.

Incorporating positive criminology and similar working paradigms presents a unique and innovative perspective in inmate education delivery. ROPES is a small, independent, theoretically-based program that values the stories of desisters, believing they need to make sense out of their lives and will begin to do this by reframing themselves within their narratives. Maruna (2015) posits the current working model presumes the causal agent in desistance is the program, not the individuals who participate in them. Criminological movements including programs such as ROPES should aim to give the rehabilitation process back to desisters. Programs that include models of self-change, empowerment, strength-based, or a rapport-based approach should be incorporated in corrections training whenever possible. In addition, adopting a “desistance-focused practice” will encourage service providers to think of themselves more as supporters of the desistance processes, putting the emphasis back on the desisters. In this model the provider’s role is less that of an expert and more as a guide to the desistance process. This model suggests we might be better off listening to those going through the process to show us what they think might best fit their individual struggles, rather than imposing solutions.

Conclusion

The need to belong is an innate desire deep within each of us, along with being respected, loved, having a purpose, and the needs for security, justice, and stimulation. The question remains how get these needs met in order to reduce conflict absent proper

social networks among those with disadvantaged backgrounds. What drives, motivates, touches, moves, and connects the human spirit? How do we touch hearts and minds? Many incarcerated people were raised in deplorable circumstances yet remain resilient. There is no disputing the fact some have assumed maladaptive behaviors in order to get their needs met. The question in my mind asks if there are places in society, other than jail, that accepts and mentors the compromised and disadvantaged?

Resilience helps define the human spirit. It should be studied, pursued, and cultivated. As a society, it may be time to make some informed decisions about compromised populations. Desistance research addresses this by investing time mining resiliency and studying successful outcomes for applicability in society. Corrections education is valuable in supporting agency and self-determination to change. We should celebrate the resilience of inmates who reject the status quo of melding into the prison culture, instead, choosing to attend classes and programs, lending hope for a new future and aiding in the formation of a new identity.

Having positive influences in our lives supporting our positive choices is crucial for staying on the right track. Our sense of belonging acknowledges the need for support. What transpires in ROPES can leave a meaningful impact on and change the narratives of participants. The role of providers is important for offering support, encouragement, and compassion as participants become change-agents. Belief in the inmate's capacity to overcome adversity, albeit at their own pace, can be life-altering.

Fundamentally, this moves the discussion from the unshackling of ROPES participants to the unshackling of the criminal justice system. This includes rethinking

endemic criminological expectations and stereotypes created by the popular media and making sound decisions about how we interact with corrections clients entrusted to the system to affect change. Is change brought about more so by long periods of maltreatment or brief periods of respectful interactions? As stated succinctly above, this study provides numerous examples indicating that even brief periods of respectful interactions leave a lasting impression.

I agree with Maruna who advocates for giving the desistance process back to the desisters and assuming the role of assistant in that process. This role is crucial in helping to formulate an offender's view of the system. In addition to rapport-based training, it is essential to consider a variety of research methodologies which build on each other in order to close gaps and discover more about the desistance process. In addition to qualitative research, a more open examination of the relationship between offenders and those working with them in the system is now in order and being called for in criminology. Teaching conflict resolution and communication skills who often lack pro-social skills is invaluable and effects self-efficacy in conflict resolution. Indeed, equipping a highly compromised population with skill they can use immediately lends significance to communication skills self-efficacy and equips them with something of value they can offer to others to improve relationships. What was not known when this study began was the impact of positive modeling and the significance it would contribute to the results.

Involvement in the criminal justice field is exciting and confusing. The discernable disconnect between criminal justice professionals and the public being served

is as ubiquitous as the need for a paradigm shift. Does practicing positive criminology help create a more emotionally intelligent and holistic justice system and contain necessary elements to become a catalyst for change? This remains to be seen. What is known is that the system as a whole is being scrutinized, and monumental efforts toward bipartisan legislation reform are under way. Meanwhile, programs incorporating theories and paradigms embodied in this study have found footing with ongoing research being conducted and showing merit. In addition, research related to positive criminological practices dovetails with recent neuroscience research on motivation and cognitive behavioral shifts.

As with any budding paradigm, shifts in ideology and practice take time and effort. Lawrence Sherman was quick to acknowledge that changes within the justice system will take courage and cautions against overreacting to negative results, stating “success is gained just as much from negative results as from positive ones, especially in the avoidance of harm” (Sherman, 2002, p. 27). There is little doubt that a criminological makeover is on the horizon. The question remains who will be heading the process and what tools will be implemented? Understanding, practicing, and sharing positive criminology emboldens practitioners to embrace unique approaches within the system and make strides towards an emotionally intelligent justice system.

Finally, I believe programs must be considered en masse as a means to desistance. ROPES should operate as part of a system to rehabilitate and encourage participants toward education aimed to change behavior. Results from this study indicate that providing conflict resolution and communication skills training to inmates builds self-

efficacy in the conflict resolution process, promotes empowerment, and is an essential component for future desistance. In addition, following the examples of theorists and theoretical frameworks in this study demonstrates that a new approach to inmate programming can make a significant impact, which should no longer be ignored if our true desire is to enhance rehabilitation and reduce incarceration rates.

References

- Altman, A., & Rhodan, M. (2015, October 1). Senate Introduces 'Gamechanger' Criminal Justice Reform Bill. *Time.com*.
- Altshuler, R. (2014). Free will, narrative, and retroactive self-constitution. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 867-883.
- Arch, J. J., & Craske, M. G. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness: Emotion regulation following a focused breathing induction. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 1849-1858.
- Arum, R., & Beattie, I. R. (1999). High School Experience and the Risk of Adult Incarceration. *Criminology*, 515-537.
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (2001). *Handbook of Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Baker, D. P. (2003). *What Happy People Know*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavior Change. *Psychological Review*, 191-215.
- Banse, R., Koppehele-Gossel, J., Kistemaker, L., Werner, V., & Schmidt, A. (2013). Pro-criminal attitudes, intervention, and recidivism. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 673-685.
- Bar-On, R. (2012, February 01). *The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Health and Wellbeing*. Retrieved from InTech: <http://www.intechopen.com/books/emotional-intelligence-new-perspectives-and-applications/the-impact-of-emotional-intelligence-on-health-and-wellbeing>

- Bar-On, R., & Parker, J. D. (2000). *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Binkert, J., & Clancy, A. L. (2011). Appreciative Inquiry. In L. Wildflower, & D. Brennan, *The Handbook of Knowledge-Based Coaching* (pp. 287-296). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Blevins, K. R., Listwan, S. J., Cullen, F. T., & Johnson, C. L. (2010). A General Strain Theory of Prison Violence and Misconduct: An Integrated Model of Inmate Behavior. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 149-166.
- Bolton, R. P. (1979). *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc.
- Boyes-Watson, C., & Pranis, K. (2010). *Heart of Hope: A Guide for Using Peacemaking Circles to Develop Emotional Literacy, Promote Healing & Build Healthy Relationships*. St. Paul: Living Justice Press.
- Burton, J. W. (1996). *Conflict Resolution*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Burton, J. W., & Sandole, D. J. (1986). Generic Theory: The Basis of Conflict Resolution. *Negotiation Journal*, 333-344.
- Byrne, C. F., & Trew, K. J. (2008). Pathways Through Crime: The Development of Crime and Desistance in the Accounts of Men and Women Offenders. *The Howard Journal*, 238-258.
- Canton, R. (2015). Crime, punishment and the moral emotions: Righteous minds and their attitudes towards punishment. *Punishment and Society*, 54-72.

- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2005). Optimism. In C. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez, *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 231-243). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Casargian, R., Phillips, J., & Wolman, R. (2007). An Emotional Literacy Intervention with Incarcerated Individuals. *American Journal of Forensic Psychology*.
- Choate, B. R., & Normore, A. H. (2013). Leadership's Role in Reducing Jail Violence and Recidivism. *Advances in Educational Administration*, 163-180.
- Clark, M. D. (1998). Strength-Based Practice: The ABC's of Working With Adolescents Who Don't Want to Work With You. *Federal Probation*, 46.
- Cloke, K. (2001). *Mediating Dangerously: The Frontiers of Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Coate, R. A., & Rosati, J. A. (1988). Human Needs in World Society. In R. A. Coate, & J. A. Rosati, *The Power of Human Needs in World Society* (pp. 1-20). Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishing.
- Cooney, S. M., Huser, M., Small, S., & O'Connor, C. (2007). *What Works, Wisconsin-- Research to Practice Series*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin-Extension.
- Crayton, A., & Neusteter, S. R. (2007). *The Current State of Correctional Education*. New York: John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishers.
- Cuddy, A. (2015). *Presence*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

- Dammer, H. R. (2002). The Reasons for Religious Involvement in the Correctional Environment. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 35-58.
- Dobkin, P. L. (2008). Mindfulness-based stress reduction: What processes are at work? *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 8-16.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 377-389.
- Ferszt, G. G., Salgado, D., DeFedele, S., & Leveillee, M. (2008). Houses of Healing: A Group Intervention for Grieving Women in Prison. *The Prison Journal*, 46-62.
- Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2011). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Frankl, V. E. (1959). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2003). The value of positive emotions: the emerging science of positive psychology is coming to understand why its good to feel good. *American Scientist*, 330-335.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Joiner, T. (2002). Positive Emotions Trigger Upward Spirals Toward Emotional Well-being. *American Psychological Society*, 172-175.
- Gergen, K. J. (2009). *An Invitation to Social Construction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication Corps.
- Giordano, P. C., Cernkovich, S. A., & Rudolph, J. L. (2002). Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 990-1008.

- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 597-607.
- Goleman, D. (1997). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Trade Paperback.
- Halling, S., & Dearborn Nill, J. (1995). A Brief History of Existential - Phenomenological Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 1-45.
- Hansen, T. (2012). Network Facilitation and Social Capital. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 164-192.
- Hansenne, M. (2012, February 01). *Clinical Perspectives in Emotional Intelligence*. Retrieved from Intech: Open Science, Open Mind: <http://www.intechopen.com>
- Harbaugh, C. N., & Vasey, M. W. (2014). When do people benefit from gratitude practice? *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 535-546.
- Hearn, N. (2010). Theory of Desistance. *Internet Journal of Criminology*, 1-13.
- Hedeen, T. (2005). Coercion and Self-determination in Court-connected Mediation: All mediations are voluntary, but some are more voluntary than others. *The Justice System Journal*, 274-292.
- Himelstein, S. (2011). Meditation Research: The State of the Art in Correctional Settings. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 646-661.
- Hughes, M., & Bradford Terrell, J. (2012). *Emotional Intelligence in Action*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

- Jewell, J. D., & Elliff, S. J. (2013). An Investigation of the Effectiveness of the Relaxation Skills Violence Prevention (RSVP) Program with Juvenile Detainees. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 203-213.
- Karstedt, S. (2002). Emotions and criminal justice. *Theoretical Criminology*, 299-317.
- Katz, N., Lawyer, J. W., & Sweedler, M. K. (2011). *Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills*. Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
- Kaufer, L., Noll, D. E., & Mayer, J. (2014). Prisoner Facilitated Mediation: Bringing peace to prisons and communities. *Cardoza Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 187-221.
- King, S. (2013). Early desistance narratives: A qualitative analysis of probationers' transitions toward desistance. *Punishment and Society*, 147-165.
- Klein, S., Tolbert, M., Bugarin, R., Cataldi, E. F., Tauschek, G., & MPR Associates, I. (2004). *Correctional Education: Assessing the Status of Prison Programs and Information Needs*. Jessup: The U.S. Department of Education.
- Koppelman-Sweedler, M., & Black-Kent, B. (2011). Positions, Needs and Interests. In N. H. Katz, J. W. Lawyer, & M. Koppelman-Sweedler, *Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills* (pp. 105-111). Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lagana, T., & Lagana, L. (2009). *Serving Productive Time*. Deerfield Beach: Health Communications, Inc.

- Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1-29.
- Layton MacKenzie, D. (2000). Evidence-Based Corrections: Identifying What Works. *Crime and Delinquency*, 457-471.
- Layton-MacKenzie, D. P. (2008). *Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs*. New York: John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Lowenkamp, C. T., Hubbard, D., Makarios, M. D., & Latessa, E. J. (2009). A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation of Thinking For a Change. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 137-146.
- Lucado, M. (1997). *You Are Special*. Wheaton: Crossway.
- Luskin, F. P. (2002). *Forgive for Good*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing Qualitative Research Fifth Edition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Martin, K., & Stermac, L. (2009). Measuring Hope: Is hope related to criminal behavior in offenders? *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 693-705.
- Martinson, R. (1974). What works? - questions and answers about prison reform. *National Affairs*, 22-54.

- Maruna, S. (2006). Who Owns Resettlement? Towards Restorative Re-Integration. *British Journal of Community Justice*, 23-33.
- Maruna, S. (2015). Qualitative Research, Theory Development, and Evidence-Based Corrections: Can Success Stories Be "Evidence"? *Qualitative Research in Criminology*, 311-337.
- Maruna, S., & LeBel, T. P. (2003). Welcome Home? Examining the "Reentry Court" Concept from a Strengths-based Perspective. *Western Criminology Review*, 91-107.
- McKinney, D. P., & Cotronea, M. A. (2011). Using Self-Determination Theory in Correctional Education Program Development. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 175-193.
- Meadows, D. H. (2008). *Thinking in Systems*. White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Michalak, J., Teismann, T., Heidenreich, T., Strohle, G., & Vocks, S. (2010). Buffering low self-esteem: The effect of mindful acceptance on the relationship between self-esteem and depression. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 751-754.
- Mills, S. (2003, February). Empathizing with the Enemy: Transformation of Palestinian-Israeli conflict by overcoming psychological and structural obstacles (Master's thesis) . Sydney, Australia: Retrieved from <http://palestineisraelolutions.blogspot.com>.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Paternoster, R., & Bushway, S. (2009). Desistance and the Feared Self: Toward an Identity Theory of Criminal Desistance. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 1103-1156.
- Pennebaker, J. W., & Seagal, J. D. (1999). Forming a Story: The Health Benefits of Narrative. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, pp. 1243-1254.
- Pepping, C., O'Donovan, A., & Davis, P. (2013). The positive effects of mindfulness on self-esteem. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 376-386.
- Pfaff, J. F. (2008). The Empirics of Prison Growth: A critical review and path forward. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 547-622.
- Post, S. G. (2005). Altruism, Happiness, and Health: It's Good to Be Good. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 66-77.
- Pranis, K. (1997, December). Peacemaking Circles. *Corrections Today*, pp. 72-76.
- Pranis, K. (2005). *The Little Book of Circle Processes*. Intercourse: Good Books.
- Presser, L. (2009). The Narratives of Offenders. *Theoretical Criminology*, 177-200.
- Pruitt, D. G., & Kim, S. H. (2004). *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*. New York: Mc-Graw Hill.
- Rasmussen, M. K., & Pidgeon, A. M. (2011). The direct and indirect benefits of dispositional mindfulness on self-esteem and social anxiety. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 227-233.
- Ronel, N. (2015). How can criminology (and victimology) become positive? In N. Ronel, & D. Segev, *Positive Criminology* (pp. 13-31). New York: Routledge.

- Ronel, N., & Elisha, E. (2011). A Different Perspective: Introducing Positive Criminology. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 305-325.
- Ronel, N., & Segev, D. (2013). Positive Criminology in Practice. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 1-19.
- Ronel, N., & Segev, D. (2015). Introduction: The good can overcome the bad. In N. Ronel, & D. Segev, *Positive Criminology* (pp. 4-12). New York: Routledge.
- Ronel, N., Frid, N., & Timor, U. (2013). The Practice of Positive Criminology: A Vipassana course in prison. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 133-153.
- Saarni, C. (1999). *The Development of Emotional Competence*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Saarni, C. (2000). Emotional Competence. In R. Bar-On, & D. Parker, *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence: Theory, development, assessment, and application at home, school, and in the workplace* (pp. 68-91). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 185-211.
- Schutte, N. S., & Malouff, J. M. (2011). Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 1116-1119.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Serin, R. a. (2005). *Evidence-Based Practice: Principles for Enhancing Correctional Results in Prisons*. Washington, D.C. : U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyumbomirsky, S. (2007). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 73-82.
- Sherman, L. W. (2003). Reason for Emotion: Reinventing Justice with Theories, Innovations, and Research--The American Society of Criminology 2002 Presidential Address. *Criminology*, 1-37.
- Snyder, C., Rand, K. L., & Sigmon, D. R. (2005). Hope Theory. In C. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez, *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 257-276). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Tewksbury, R. E., & Taylor, J. M. (2000). Opportunities Lost: The Consequences of Eliminating Pell Grant Eligibility for Correctional Education Students. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 43-56.
- Toews, B. (2006). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice for People in Prison*. Intercourse: Good Books.
- Topping, K., Bremner, W., & Holmes, E. A. (2000). Social Competence: The social construction of the concept. In R. Bar-On, & J. D. Parker, *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence* (pp. 28-39). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Travis, J., & Visher, C. (2005). *Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Tyer, T. R. (2006). Restorative Justice and Procedural Justice: Dealing with Rule Breaking. *Journal of Social Issues*, 307-326.
- Ubah, C. B., & Robinson, R. L. (2003). A Grounded Look at the Debate Over Prison-Based Education: Optimistic theory versus pessimistic worldview. *The Prison Journal*, 115-29.
- University, N. S. (2011, September 16). Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board Policies and Procedures. *Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board Policies and Procedures*. Davie, Florida: Nova Southeastern University.
- Vacca, J. S. (2004). Educated Prisoners are Less Likely to Return to Prison. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 297-304.
- Van Harreveld, F., Van Der Pligt, J., Claassen, L., & Van Dijk, W. W. (2007). Inmate Emotion Coping and Psychological and Physical Well-being: The use of crying over spilled milk. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 697-708.
- Van Wormer, K. P. (1999). The Strengths Perspective: A paradigm for correctional counseling. *Federal Probation and Parole*, 51-58.
- vanOyen Witvleit, C., Knoll, R. W., Hinman, N. G., & DeYoung, P. A. (2010). Compassion-focused reappraisal, benefit-focused reappraisal, and rumination after an interpersonal offense: Emotion-regulation implications for subjective emotion, linguistic responses, and physiology. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 226-242.

- vanOyen Witvleit, C., Ludwig, T. E., & Vander Laan, K. L. (2001). Granting Forgiveness or Harboring Grudges: Implications for Emotion, Physiology, and Health. *Psychological Science*, 117-123.
- Wakefield, S., & Uggen, C. (2010). Incarceration and Stratification. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 387-406.
- Waldman, E. (2010). Mindfulness, Emotions, and Ethics: The Right Stuff? *Nevada Law Journal*, 513-534.
- Walker, L., & Sakai, T. (2006, December). A Gift of Listening for Hawaii's Inmates. *Corrections Today*, pp. 58-61.
- Watkins, P. C., Grimm, D. L., & Kolts, R. (2004). Counting Your Blessings: Positive memories among grateful persons. *Current Psychology: Development * Learning * Personality * Social*, 52-67.
- Watkins, P. C., Woodward, K., Stone, T., & Kolts, R. L. (2003). Gratitude and Happiness: Development of a Measure of Gratitude, and Relationship with Subjective Well-being. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 431-452.
- Weeks, D. P. (1992). *The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution*. New York: Penguin Putnam Press.
- Weinstein, N., Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). A multi-method examination of the effects of mindfulness on stress attribution, coping, and emotional well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 374-385.
- Welp, L., & Brown, C. M. (2013). Self-compassion, empathy, and helping intentions. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 54-65.

- Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological Research Methods for Counseling Psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 167-177.
- Wexler, H. K., Lurigio, A. J., & Rodriguez, P. F. (2011). Reforming the Criminal Justice System in the United States: Issues and Recommendations. *The Prison Journal*, 1S-11S.
- Wilmot, W., & Hocker, J. (2011). *Interpersonal Conflict Eighth edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wing, J. F., Schutte, N. S., & Byrne, B. (2006). The Effect of Positive Writing on Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 1291-1302.
- Wing, N. (2013, August 13). *Here Are All of the Nations that Incarcerate More of their Population than the U.S.* Retrieved from Huffington Post:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/13/incarceration-rate-per-capita_n_3745291.html?view=screen
- Wojnar, D. M., & Swanson, K. M. (2007). Phenomenology: An Exploration. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 172-180.
- Wooldredge, J. D. (1999). Inmate Experiences and Psychological Well-being. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 235-250.
- Zehr, H. (2002). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Intercourse: Good Books.

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in the ROPES Course study



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ROPES COURSE STUDY

Dear ROPES Graduates,

You are invited to participate in the ROPES study. You are receiving this invitation because you attended the ROPES Course and received a certificate. Now it's your turn to provide feedback on the course.

You are not obligated to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, a research assistant will spend approximately 45-90 minutes with you asking questions about your experience as a participant of ROPES. Your answers will be audiotaped in order to gather true and authentic impressions of the course. Your identity will be coded and the code will be kept under lock and key by the primary researcher (Chris Wilson).

Prior to participation, you will meet with Chris and the research assistant who will review the informed consent form. Informed consent will talk about your rights as a research participant. Even if you choose to meet with the researcher initially, that—in no way—obligates you to participate in the study.

The informed consent meeting will be held on _____ at _____. You may indicate your choice below, sign and date the form, and return it to the Program Coordinator or submit it to the bubble with instructions that it be returned to Programs. Please check one box below indicating your choice.

- Yes**, I want to attend the meeting explaining what the study is about and what my rights are.
- No**, I don't want to attend the meeting explaining what the study is about and what my rights are.

Print name: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Wilson
Ph.D. Candidate
Nova Southeastern University
Dept. of Conflict Resolution Studies

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
3301 College Avenue • Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314-7796
(954) 262-3000 • 800-262-7978 • Fax: (954) 262-3968
Email: shss@nsu.nova.edu • <http://shss.nova.edu>

Appendix B: Consent Form

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: JUL 15 2015
Continuing Review Date: JUL 14 2016

**Consent Form**

For participation in the research study entitled:

*Unshackled: A Phenomenological Study of the Effects of Holistic Conflict Resolution
Training on Inmate Self-efficacy*

Funding source: None

IRB Protocol No. 05141507F

Principal Investigator
Christina R. Wilson, M.S., PGC
Nova Southeastern University
Graduate School of Humanities
And Social Sciences
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314

Co-Investigator
Elena Bastidas, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University
Graduate School of Humanities
and Social Sciences
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314

Research Assistant
Julia Loughney
Weber State University

For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact:
Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)
Nova Southeastern University
(954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu

Site Information:
Davis County Jail
800 W. State Street
Farmington, UT 84025
(801) 451-4200

What is this study about?

You are invited to participate in a research study to provide feedback on the ROPES course.

Why are you asking me?


You have been invited to participate because you have attended the ROPES course and received a certificate. There will be eight to 25 participants in this research study which will include face-to-face, audiotaped interviews.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

You will work with a research assistant and provide some personal information before being asked open-ended questions about the ROPES course. You will be given time and space to answer the questions to the best of your ability. Your answers will be tape recorded. You will not

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
3301 College Avenue • Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314-7796
(954) 262-3000 • 800-262-7978 • Fax (954) 262-3868
Email: shss@nsu.nova.edu • <http://shss.nova.edu>

Initials: _____ Date: _____


 NOVA Southeastern University
 Institutional Review Board
 Approval Date: JUL 15 2015
 Continuing Review Date: JUL 14 2016

be asked questions about why you are in jail. Your interview will last 45-90 minutes.

Will there be audio or video recording?

This research project will include audio recording of your interview. The recording will be available to be heard by the primary researcher and research assistant only. The recording will be transcribed by the primary researcher, Chris Wilson. Ms. Wilson will be wearing earphones during transcription to preserve privacy. The recording will be kept by Chris Wilson in a locked cabinet. The recording will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study.

The recording will be destroyed after that time by erasing the tape. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described in this paragraph.

What are the dangers to me?

Risks to you are minimal, meaning they are not thought to be greater than other risks you experience in a typical day. Being recorded means that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Sharing your opinions about the ROPES course may make you anxious or bring back unhappy memories. If this happens, the research assistant will try to help you through it. If you need further help, he will suggest you request to see the Facility counselor. If you have questions about the research, your research rights, or if you experience any injury because of the research, please notify the Director of Programs who can contact Nova Southeastern University's IRB.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits associated with this study.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you nor payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information private?

The questionnaire will be coded and will not ask you for any identifying information that could be linked specifically to you. The transcripts of the tapes will not have any information that could be linked to you. As mentioned, the tapes will be erased 36 months after the study ends. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The IRB, regulatory agencies, or Dr. Elena Bastidas may review research records.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?

You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. There are no repercussions to you if you leave the study or decide not to participate. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you before the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research. Please note that your standing within the correctional facility will not be impacted by your decision to participate or refusal to participate. There are no legal benefits or harms associated with your decision.

Initials: _____ Date: _____

NOVA INSTITUTIONAL
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: JUL 15 2015
Continuing Review Date: JUL 14 2016

Other considerations:

The principal investigator of this research study has a financial interest as it relates to this study in that she is paid to teach ROPES courses in the Davis County jail.

If the researchers learn anything which might change your mind about being involved, you will be told of this information.

If you have any study-related questions in the future or experience a research-related injury you can contact Chris Wilson through the Program Director.

If you feel you have been coerced in any way to participate in this study, please notify the research assistant, Chris Wilson, or the Program Director.

Voluntary consent by participation:

By signing below, you indicate that:

- This study has been explained to you.
- You have read this document or it has been read to you.
- Your questions about this research study have been answered.
- You have been told that you may ask the researcher any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related injury and that contact can be made by requesting it through the Program Director.
- You have been told that you may ask Institutional Review Board (IRB) personnel questions about your study rights.
- You are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read it and signed it and that a copy will be given to you at your interview.

You voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled *Unshackled: A Phenomenological Study of the Effects of Holistic Conflict Resolution Training on Inmate Self-efficacy*

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of person obtaining consent: _____

Date: _____

Initials: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Protocol and Questionnaire

Unshackled: A Phenomenological Study of the Effects of Holistic Conflict Resolution Training on Inmate Self-efficacy Interview Protocol and Questionnaire

Date:	
Time of interview:	
Duration:	
Facility:	
Interviewer:	
Interviewee code:	
Audio tape info	Start: _____ Stop: _____
Notes:	

This phenomenological study aims to understand the experience of participants who attended the ROPES course.

**Demographic information:
below.**

Circle the appropriate response

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| 1. Gender | Male | Female | | | |
| 2. Holding agency | County | State | | | |
| 3. What age were you when you were first
incarcerated? | <13 | 14-18 | 19-25 | 26-32 | 33> |
| 4. Did you graduate from a traditional high school? | Yes | No | | | |

Interview format:

Interviews will be semi-structured, open-ended, and audiotaped.

Interview questions:

1. Can you describe, in as much detail as possible, your perception of conflict resolution following the ROPES course?
-

2. Do you believe your ability to deal with conflict has changed following ROPES; and if so how? (Prompt: Can you provide an example?)
-

3. Have you made any changes as a result of participating in ROPES? (Prompt: Can you describe those changes?)
-

4. What stood out to you about the training? Why?
-

5. Has the ROPES course helped you during your incarceration? Please share an example.
-

6. What, if any, components of ROPES will be helpful to you upon reentry to the community? Why do you think this will be helpful?
-

7. What changes would you suggest to refine the ROPES program?
-

8. Is there anything else you want to share about your experience in the ROPES course?
-

Appendix D: Tables

Table 8

Demographic Information

Participant code	Gender	Holding Agency	Age of 1st incarceration	Traditional high school graduate
P1	Female	County	26-32 (30)	
P2	Female	County	26-32 (28)	No
P3	Sick			
P4	Male	County	14-18 (14)	Yes
P5	No show			
P6	Male	County	<13 (13)	No
P7	Male	County	26-32 (29)	Yes
P8	Male	County	19-25 (25)	Yes
P9	Male	State	<13 (13)	No
P10	Male	State	<13 (12)	No
P11	Male	State	14-18 (15)	No
P12	Male	State	<13 (8)	No
P13	Male	State	14-18 (16)	No
P14	Male	State	<13 (13)	Yes
P15	Male	State	<13 (12)	No
P16	Transferred			
P17	Court in SLC			

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Table 9

Question one

<i>Can you describe in as much detail as possible your perception of conflict resolution following the ROPES course?</i>		
P	Course impact	Reflective statement
<i>Self-Efficacy</i>		
P1	Approach to conflict	So if I have conflict at all I can approach a person more like um assertive and I can go to them if I have a problem with them and I can do eye to eye contact.
P4	Stress reduction	I'm getting along easier. I'm not stressed out. I'm not anxious. I just let things go on and if it needs to get resolved than I can... yeah. There you go.
P10	Skill Applicability	I actually used some of the things that she taught us out of it like with my family.
P11	Skill Applicability	I know it's helped me a lot. I've actually applied a lot of the things I've learned in Chris' class back in the section.
P11	Skill Applicability	I've learned a lot of things that I never knew before and I've used them in my daily life and I think they're helping. I think it's a wonderful class.
P15	Lifestyle change	Cause I've been a gang member all my life. This time I actually gave it up, ya know. So it's been kind of hard because I run into a lot of my old friends and that's a lot of conflict, man. Ya know. I'm still learning how to walk away from it but it helped me out a lot.
<i>Knowledge/skill acquisition</i>		
P1	Communication skills	I've learned, still working on it but not to interrupt people...
P4	Impulse control	I think what sticks out for me the most from the ROPES course is not acting on impulse and conflict will resolve itself, basically.
P7	Assertiveness	Statements of assertiveness can help in that it can state specifically the things you want without um being unreasonable. Take things from an "I" statement, from a personal standpoint about making it personal, accepting responsibility and standing up for yourself without being rude or putting somebody else down just because you're trying to for your own feelings.
P7	Problem solving	We can think things out and make clear decisions, be logical about our decisions.
<i>Perceptions</i>		
P7	Be prepared	It's is always important to have a plan. Conflict resolution be

		prepared and even though you can't prepare for every situation being prepared for what you can will help resolve conflict in a more effective, powerful way.
P9	Reflection/ impulse control	I see it a lot differently. I see it as taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture and thinking about what I do before I do it.
P10	Introduced options	And just I liked it a lot and it just opened a lot of doors to a lot of different way or different avenues to use to resolve conflict. I liked it a lot.
P14	Introduced tools	But after taking the class it made me realize that I could get more out of it, ya know, from the tools that I use, ya know, to de-escalates the uh situation.
P11	Evaluative	I think it's a wonderful class.
P13	Evaluative	I like the energies. It was good though, like, the things she did teach them like the little sugar she did a little experiment with sugar to show them ... oh man, they be doing that in the sections. So, it was cool though.
P15	Evaluative	It's cool, I enjoyed it.
<i>Emotional literacy</i>		
P2	Emotional regulation	It's helped me to communicate and articulate my... what's going on with me and what I want and like deal with things with less of an emotional reaction.
P7	Self-awareness	Conflict resolution...it's best to do it with um skill, with a clear mind um a lot of the ROPES course was dedicated to helping us understand ourselves such as trigger points and self-awareness.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Table 10

Question Four

<i>What stood out to you about the training and why?</i>		
P	Outstanding components	Associated Statements
<i>Course elements</i>		
P1	Amazing	Amazing, I liked it, I enjoyed it.
P2	Chronology and flow	It “flowed”; the order in which different things were um different weeks went ya know like the ah different things that we address every week I think it just rolled; well put together.
P8	Chronology and flow	I was unsure about how everything was going to connect. At the end of the course...it did actually come together really nicely.
P8	Transcends conflict resolution	I feel like what was covered in the course definitely transcended just that one notion of conflict resolution and I actually appreciated that.
P10	Depth	How in-depth the class is. It’s a lot more than anybody would realize.
<i>Instructor</i>		
P1	Professionalism	The teacher. She’s very professional. She walked you through it and if you had questions or concerns and still weren’t sure she just sat there and listened to you.
P9	Multi-partial interest	What stood out is because she took interest in, she took interest in all of us and wasn’t about herself and just her class; tried to help us with it instead of just following the course and not taking opinions from anybody; Teacher paid attention instead of just collecting a check.
P14	Patience	She stood out the most because she took the time to explain things and she let us like role-play whatever I guess and she let us see how it worked, man. And that was uh more than anything I’ve ever got out of a class because you know the teachers in prison they just give you paperwork, have you watch a video or whatever. They say “here you go” and they don’t explain it and they just expect you just to read it and go okay this is it. And it don’t work that way cause I tried it. That ain’t how it was in the book. She cares a lot, man, and it’s cool, man.
<i>Perspective</i>		
P6	Choice	I just realized that it’s up to you to decide to use it and if you do use it then it definitely works.
P7	Positive Influences	We need to be mindful of that and aware of who we let into our life and if it’s gonna affect us negatively and we don’t want it to then we need to find ways to get it out which we can do through the conflict resolution skills of being assertive, of setting goals,

		of having a plan of not being afraid to turn people away that aren't good for us.
P7	Positivity	Helping ourselves to be more positive towards other people.
P14	Trust	I'm more open; And so it did help me in a way where, ya know, now I'm more open.
Acquired skills		
P12	Assertiveness	Learning how to get your point across without being aggressive or passive, I guess, has really helped me out.
P7		Being able to stand up for myself to not be bullied so easily by myself and others.
P12		There's just a lot of things I never knew I'd be able to do as far as like, especially when it comes to being assertive.
P12		I thought being assertive meant you had to be a little wimp. I didn't know that being assertive meant like uh just talking. Telling somebody how you feel without being passive or without being aggressive.
P10	Non-violent conflict resolution	Ability to talk it out instead of fight it out.
P7	Consequential thinking	Outside influences really can bring us down if we let them.
Other		
P4	Circle	Circle stood out for me because it was, it felt like I wasn't being judged. I could say whatever I needed to, get it off my chest and it was gone. It wasn't going to come back. Circle was really helpful for me.
P14	Homework	The homework was kind of challenging because we all try to, ya know, avoid our past and stuff. We try to avoid things that we don't want to dig up and things like that and then when she gave us homework and I had a choice, ya know, where I can say 'should I do it or should I not.
P13	Course Refinement	Water it down for this population; some participants didn't get it; but it would be more beneficial uh for us to like take the time to make sure everybody got it cause I feel like some of them didn't really get it; Like my peers would come to me and want me to help them with their assignment and some stuff and I'm like 'it's pretty basic.' I'm like 'there's no right answer.' But so I think that takes away from what you're trying to do like cognitive restructuring, like getting them to realize, ya know. So they're thinking 'I gotta sound smart' or 'Am I gonna fail?' "So worried about presentation.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Table 11

Question Five

<i>Has the ROPES course helped you during your incarceration? Please share an example.</i>		
P	Relevant field	Reflective Statement
All respondents answered affirmatively to this question and provided the statements illustrated below.		
<i>Relational</i>		
P2	Assertive communication	Yes, I'm no longer a doormat, um I can say "no" um I was a people pleaser and it's not that I don't want to please people but I know now that I have to um that I matter basically so it's helped a lot that way.
P4	Bonding, trust	Like with the guys I was in here with. We've become closer and so we still talk about conflict and if we're going through anything it's still like we're in class, basically. We go through it together.
P7	Stress reduction/ Social skill enhancement	That's helped me too in the pod not worry so much about what other people think of me. I can stick to my couple of friends we play cards and work puzzles and talk and workout and I don't have to worry about making sure I'm not in the way of other people. I'm still polite and whatnot but I don't have to go out of my way to make sure that everybody likes me.
P10	Coping skills	Like I said just to be able to deal with certain individuals that I may not like or may not have the same kind of background or have too many things in common.
<i>Intra-personal/relational</i>		
P1	Skill execution, self-awareness	I'm learning how to be an active listener. Not interrupt people. Give good feedback. Change my stinkin thinkin as she calls it into positive thinking and it's just amazing all the stuff you do learn. You learn all about yourself and why you have these emotions and how you can change these emotions and who I really am. I have changed and I learned a lot during this past 7 months I've been here so.
P6	Conflict resolution, self-awareness	All I cared about was myself. So now to understand when someone else is having problems communicating with me I choose to talk to them and figure out what the problem is and resolve it.
P8	Self-awareness, communication	I've come here I've realized with assistance of the course that I was becoming more of an aggressive communicator and I was kind of just like being rude just, ya know, for lack of a better term and I realized that that was unnecessary and just because I'm in jail doesn't mean that um, ya know, I can't still have

		respectful, mutually beneficial conversations and agreements with people.
P9	Self-awareness, familial obligations	She's two years old and I've been down the whole time and I think this class kind of helped me open my eyes because I feel that's a conflict. It's a conflict between what I want and what needs me out there.
P12	Behavior change, consequential thinking skills	It's just helped me stay out of trouble, man. It's helped me think twice before I do or say anything.
P13	Stress reduction/ Empathy	...so it helped me to like calm down and see both sides.
P14	Changed perspective	Now that I see things in a very positive and open perspective that ya know if you got something to say, say it ya know.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Table 12

Question Seven

<i>What changes would you suggest to refine the ROPES program?</i>		
P	Feature	Participant Quotes
<i>REFINEMENTS:</i>		
<i>No change</i>		
P4	Status quo	None. I liked it.
P6	Status quo	None. Really. None at all. Laugh.
P9	Status quo	What changes? Um, as far as changes I don't, I didn't disagree with too much of it. I didn't really disagree with any of it. And I agree with the way she works so I would say she doesn't need to make any changes.
P15	Status quo	I think she's doing a good job already.
<i>Course expansion themes</i>		
P7	Course expansion, Follow-up course	It was an amazing program, great course. The number one thing I think that would make it better is just if it was just longer or if there was a follow up course.
P8	Course expansion	So I think that, I don't know if it's possible but like more weeks or something, more courses, more topics, more time on certain topics things like that. It just went by way too quickly and although I appreciated what I gained from it I feel as though I could have gained more if more time had been provided.
P8	Lengthen the course	I don't know if there's a budget on time, ya know, that programs director or whomever only allows a certain amount of time. I know that it equals out to about 30 hours, um, and I like to think that I took the homework seriously and never missed an assignment, um, but just more a little bit more substance, more conversation, more time to have those conversations and honestly even more homework. It would have been nice.
P1	Continue the course	I don't think there's anything to change I just hope you guys can continue coming here and giving this information to us to help us better ourselves so that when we do leave here we can take these tools that we learned and apply them.
P10	Course expansion	I kind of liked the class. It was fun. It taught me a lot so nothing that I can think of. Um, mmm nothing really just maybe a part two to it.
P11	Course expansion	Maybe having it a little bit longer instead of just ten course, twelve or fifteen.
P11	Refresher course	Refresh my memory. So for graduates, for people who had the class she's already teaching for new people and then for graduates

		have one that you can come to voluntarily just to refresh what you've learned in the ROPES class.
P14	Course expansion, graduate TA's	Maybe a part two or maybe have us that's been in the class to come out and help participate teaching the class ya know.
<i>"More" themes</i>		
P7	More follow-up on skills and components	Or even just more follow up on other things like our stinking thinking how we would think negatively before and then at the end of the class re-evaluate our thoughts and see if we've improved our regular thinking for more positive.
P7	Individualize	Maybe developing more goals in class, um, more details on our plans and our gaps for handling a variety of concepts rather than just one general plan make multiple specific plans for more specific situations that we will address not only in jail but on the outs as well.
P8	Additional Time	This was the one I think I put the most thought to just because I wanted to give some honest feedback and I think the good news is that I really struggled to come up with anything that I, um, thought was ineffective, um, the one thing I honestly would have really appreciated would have been more time.
P8	More instructor input	We had in particular a class that was full of questions and a lot of good conversation, um, and as much as I appreciated that and having such an eclectic group of voices and opinions, I would have liked to get more from Chris and her educational background and from all of the work she's done in this field.
P14	Offered more often, more classes like it	No. I just think that it should have more, ya know, of this class then once in a full moon. I mean there's always a lot of people will attend this class because the fact that the way she presents it. The way the class is put out there, ya know, and 90% of the guys in here you get those who will try to reach for it try to take something out of the class, ya know, and learn from it and stuff I mean just wish that, ya know, we would have had more class like this.
<i>Curriculum pace and complexity</i>		
P7	Slow down, incorporate more content and practice	I know that a lot of areas we were kind of rushed through. We could have taken more time on, um, for more practice for more detail, um. Maybe more examples or more practice with actual conflicts having to deal with bigger conflicts, implementing the skills perhaps. More meditation skills. More self-awareness skills.
P13	Water down	We need to water it down.
P13	Simplify	I would simplify and make sure, like I would spread it out also and make sure that same thing with all of them.
P13	Slow down	You could be helping one person the whole little ten classes and

		it's cool you made the change that you wanted to but if you're trying to hit the whole group you gotta slow down but you guys are going to school for all this.
<i>Other</i>		
P9	Vet participants	I guess the only changes I would say to make, and it ain't even on the ROPES' behalf, it would be on the people who come, I guess. Cause I feel there's only so many slots for so many people and some people wanna just come just to come. But I feel you gotta be willing to take change in order to make change and some people don't, ya know what I mean?
P12	Enhance course promotion	I really, really wouldn't recommend no changes I just recommend that it be noticed. I mean not a lot of people know about the class. I feel like if it was put out there more it would be helpful to a lot of us.
P14	Inmate and community member comparison	Not just that, ya know, get some of the guys, some of the people that are on the street and compare their lives with the guys that's been incarcerated and you'll see two different worlds, ya know, and I think that's what, ya know, that's what would help this class build up more was kind of get two different group sit together and we'll listen to their side and they'll listen to our side and I think it'll help the class grow in a way that a lot of people would like to attend the class.
<i>EVALUATIVE STATEMENTS:</i>		
<i>Curriculum</i>		
P1	Impactful	I can just say the teacher's a really amazing and you guys are really gonna get a lot out of it. I just tell them I really enjoyed this class.
P2	Flow	Um, I think that it's good the way that it is. I can't think I think the whole, the, I don't know if you want to call it the stimulus or whatever, but the whole layout of the program the way that it just flowed. The way that it was brought to us was very well thought out and very well placed.
P7	Self-building	But overall I think it was a great class and it addresses the basics of everything that was really helpful. It was a good thing. It was a self-building class and I think everybody just wants more of a good thing.
P11	Helpful	I thought it was a really good class and I think it helped and I think it will continue to keep helping if it's not just one course.
P11	Life-changing	Um, but Reaching Out with Purposeful Meaning, this was a good class. It was. I'm glad I came to this class, man, because it has changed my life.
P14	In-depth	It was always kind of, ya know, find something to better myself. So by being incarcerated, ya know, um taking different classes were okay but not as deep as ROPES class and stuff. It is a good

		course.
<i>Instructor</i>		
P9	Unassuming	I thought I was just gonna come get a certificate, ya know what I mean. But I liked her. She was like, she was, like I said she was a cool person. I thought her coming in here with a Ph.D. she was gonna be, ya know what I mean, she was gonna be different, ya know what I mean? But I've learned that not all people are like that and I guess that's another thing I had learned from this class is to not judge others like that.
P9	Positive modeling	I believe she did a good job. I believe some of us are just not here to learn, ya know what I mean? But then again, like I said, I didn't come in here thinking I wanted to learn anything either but when you meet somebody that treats you with respect you wanna treat them with respect and at least hear them out. And I heard her out.
<i>Other</i>		
P14	Regret for wasted time	But other than that the class, I love it ya know, I think it helped me now to realize that, ya know, wow, ya know I should have done this, I should have done that ten years ago.
P14	Lack of personal resources	Even before I got in here but none of those were presented to me or I just never had the knowledge or the resource to go out there and look for that kind of stuff.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Table 13

Question Eight

<i>Is there anything else you want to share about your experience in the ROPES course?</i>		
P	Category	Statement
<i>Course impact</i>		
P1	Causal Sequencing	I just hope that maybe I can take some of these tools as well and take them back with me to my pod or even when I get out into the real world when I get there and maybe I can share some of the ideas and things that I've learned and help others who are struggling with the same thing that I struggle with
P2	Causal sequencing	Um and the rippling effect on um healthy um interpersonal skills and things like that are um I think tremendous. Yeah I really encourage um it to be all over, not just in this facility not just in this jail. But like, I would like to see ROPES course maybe go over to [the youth center]. Get the kids while they're younger so they don't end up being me. I think that's really important.
P11	Causal sequencing	I wish that more people would be hip to this class and come and just give it a shot cuz like I said, like I told some of the people that didn't want to come I said man, just go give it a chance.
P15	Causal sequencing	Like I said in the letter there's a not much you can do to put it in somebody's head but if you touch one person, ya know make a difference in their life, it's gonna make a difference in a lot of people's lives, man.
P2	Life-changing	Um it changes lives. Like it's changed my life.
P11	Life-changing	I feel like it's more or less saved my life. I was at a point in my life where I had to choose to keep doing what I'm doing or try something different, ya know what I mean? I'm glad I decided to try something different cause now I'm able to just trying to turn my life around before it's too late. I feel like I'm on the right path and on the right...
P2	Enhanced self-awareness	It's opened my eyes to a better perspective on how I was and who I am now.
P2	Confidence	It's so funny because um I've always been very optimistic and very positive but now I'm more confident.
P2	Enhanced self-awareness	And so now the way that it I just know so much more about me and what I want. Like I could tell you what I didn't want before but now I know some things that I do want. It's amazing, the program.
P9	Empathy and	I don't like to put myself out there. I don't like meeting new

	vulnerability	people. I don't like things like that so I think if I take anything from this class it's gonna be to put myself out there and put myself in other people's shoes.
P9	Perceptions	Um, the only thing I think that's changed is my perception on how I deal with people.
P9	Effective communication	She would give us little slip but I just wouldn't talk to people and it would just avoid conflict and just avoid being a smart aleck towards people and uh I think it brought me out and it showed me, ya know what I mean, instead of doing that and not interacting with people to interact with them but just pay attention to your surroundings.
P9	Social skills	And I think that's one of the things she was teaching us is how to deal with people.
P13	Motivation	And I see that now it's like rocket fuel for my little motivation to get out there and be the change because I didn't kill nobody. I didn't rape nobody. I'm not out there killing puppies but that's what they treat us in here. They feed us scrap. They treat us it's all bad. So I wanna see some change. We're all people that make mistakes.
P14	Empathy	Things that we do as a group, ya know, that was the thing we used in a group was basically listen to each other's, ya know, uh, their feelings of what they went through and stuff. And some of us never went through it but trying to picture or put our self in their shoes and stuff. And it's really, it's hard so what I learned from that program was basically how to be more open and listen to other, ya know, people's feelings and stuff.
<i>Expressions of gratitude</i>		
P2	Honored to provide feedback	Thank you for doing this it made me feel a lot better. I was really honored to sit here and give feedback.
P6	Top five of classes	Just I'm thankful. This class is definitely like one of the five classes that I can relate back to and realize that you need to start somewhere.
P8	Thankful to attend	Um more than anything I just sincerely appreciated getting to take the class.
P8	Class discussions	I really enjoyed every single thing that we got to discuss.
P2	Repeat course	Just I hope it continues here and I'm thinking about signing up again because I took mine last year but I think I'm gonna do it again.
P12	Acquired knowledge	I just thank Chris, thank Chris for um, for um just providing with the knowledge that I now have. I really am thankful for this class, man

P15	Instructor's time	I really appreciate the time you guys take to teach us these classes, ya know.
P15	Repeat	So like I said I appreciate you guy's time. Can I take this course again? Cause there's probably certain things I didn't do. Because at first I was just trying to go through it real quick. I started liking the class man so I'd like to try it again.
<i>General course comments</i>		
P2	Boundaries	So I think that that is amazing because I really didn't have too many.
P10	Outside of comfort zones	Took us to the edge of discomfort sometimes helped us be able to get through it ya know what I mean that's how it was so effective and her teaching, ya know what I mean, so like I said I liked the class a lot. It was fun.
P11	Good	It was a good course.
P11	Try something new	Uh, it's sad, um, to see how everybody talks about they love their kids and love their family but yet we made the same, same selfish decisions and come back to the same old sob story. We love our kids and would do anything for them. So I don't know I just had to try something different and if it doesn't work out it doesn't work out. Obviously, what we're doing right now don't work. So why be scared to try something different. Ya know what I mean? That's probably it.
P14	Respect ROPES	Instead of taking it back and criticize and joke about it because most people are not, ya know, it's a class to be serious about instead of joking around but that's what I learned from this class.
P14	Trust building	Circle. That's one thing I like about the circle. The trust, ya know.
<i>INSTRUCTOR ATTRIBUTES:</i>		
<i>Classroom management skills</i>		
P2	Competent	Yeah Chris is amazing. She knows what she's doing and she... you're amazing too.
P7	Professional	Having taken other classes here in the jail I especially appreciated the professionalism of the teacher.
P8	Professional	I definitely appreciated the professionalism that Chris brought into her classroom. She was always personable, always polite and respectful. She brought good humor, she told stories and I loved that she demonstrated that she was human and she made herself very relatable um but she still maintained an air of professionalism.
P7	Participant inclusivity	The actual teaching skills she that employed she was tremendous at getting everyone to participate.
P10	Participant	I don't know if it was something assigned to her or she chose to

	inclusivity	do the ROPES course but I mean they picked the perfect person to do it I mean she kept us involved.
P7	Caring environment	I could feel her genuine care and concern for me as well as for each other member of the class and I think that helped us to have a great class environment.
P7	Constructive feedback	I experienced that multiple times when I would make a comment or make a statement about how I would react to something or an assignment I did and she would give me more tips on how to improve it or make it better or make myself better.
<i>Interpersonal skills</i>		
P7	Engaged	If somebody had a comment or a question she would let them talk she wouldn't cut people off she wouldn't keep going and talk over others she was always genuinely interested in the comments of others as well.
P7	Encouraging	She didn't dismiss them she addressed them or commented on them encouraged them in their progress um was always willing to give help and suggestions.
P8	Positive modeling	I respect and I also just appreciated how she's just educated, she has a solid education, she's working on a dissertation and I have a significant amount of respect for that but at the same time she didn't place herself on a pedestal because of it.
P8	Goodness	I just have a lot of respect for Chris and the fact that she dedicates time to coming here and that she sees value in helping people in this type of a situation refine themselves and hopefully be a little better when they leave.
P12	Influential	Um without her, I mean I wouldn't be who I am today.
P13	Positive modeling	She wants to get her little Ph.D. and I hope she can be the voice for us because we need a unifying and voice for us cause there's lots of things that they do to us that they shouldn't. It was a pleasant experience and uh I hope that she goes on and you go on to be the change like change like you wanna do.

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Table 14

Theoretical Implications

P	THEORY/ Sub-themes	Quotes – Correlation between course and theories
<i>HUMAN NEEDS</i>	<i>Esteem, meaning, identity, control, justice, security, stimulation, and peace</i>	
P7	Esteem	Being able to talk assertively, logically, rationally, um using the skills that we learned in class helps to work through those conflicts without creating fights uh over the tv or between the inmates and allows us more freedoms and respect from the guards when we can handle our own problems.
P13	Meaning	I see now it's like rocket fuel for my little motivation to get out there and be the change.
P1	Identity	It's opened my eyes to a better perspective on how I was and who I am now
P8	Control	It's important for me to keep myself in check and remember that ultimately I'm responsible for the way I respond.
P8	Control	Now I understand I do have a choice to think and make good decisions.
P4	Security	Circle stood out for me. Because it was, it felt safe. It felt like I wasn't being judged. I could say whatever I needed to, get it off my chest and it was gone
P13	Stimulation	And so taking this class was where my mind's at right now, it's like mmm brain food I guess
P8	Peace	Um additionally, I really liked the uh mindfulness exercises we did. It really is such a seemingly simple thing um and it's just 5 minutes but it can really make a difference and I remember each and every time that we did one of those exercise feeling better afterwards
<i>HOPE THEORY</i>	<i>Focuses on hope not as an emotion but as a cognitive construct enabling one to find pathways to desired goals</i>	
P1	Reentry	I think it's gonna help me a lot when I get out there especially because everything is going to hit me at once
P7	Reentry	But through these skills – through positive thinking, self-awareness, through assertiveness I feel more prepared that when I get out I can be stronger.
P1	Agency	Self-talk is the biggest one I've learned and how to change negative feelings into something positive
P11	Achieving	I know it's helped me a lot. I've actually applied a lot of

	desired outcomes	the things I've learned in Chris' class back in the section.
<i>SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY</i>	<i>Reality is created through our words; Identity or 'self' is created within relationships; Emotions are not the private possessions of the individual mind but are the property of ongoing relationship; Encourages inquiry</i>	
P7	Self-awareness	A lot of conflict can bring us down, um, and having tools and keys that can help you remind yourself who you are, what you like to get back into a positive state of mind can keep you from being in a negative place that promotes reacting
P4	Empathy	Previous to the ROPES course I just wouldn't, I just wasn't putting myself in her shoes as much as I should have and that's one of the things we learned in ROPES is to put our self in the other person's shoes and you can't really be that, it doesn't hold as much bearing.
P1	Self-narrative	Self-talk is the biggest one I've learned and how to change negative feelings into something positive.
P15	Emotional competency	So I'm like "damn" so now I actually sit down and try to I try to help them as much as I can. There's a lot of emotional people in here, man.
<i>APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY</i>	<i>Strength-based, solution-focused, invites questions, positive affect and social bonds are needed to create momentum for change.</i>	
P7	Positivity	A lot of the personal changes that I just mentioned um specifically I have a small list of self-affirmation/positive thinking thoughts that I repeat to myself daily.
P12	Positive influences	I started surrounding myself with people who are going to be a positive influence in my life.
P12	Empowerment	I've been down for a little while now, almost a decade and ah, dang, whole time I've been down I was with violence but after doing this class, it's the longest I've been in population.
P11	Identity reconstruction	I would probably have been to max already 3 times over I haven't done that so far and I only got less than a year left.
P12		It's kind of hard but I finally decided just to put her as part of my past. My past is what was ruining my life.
<i>RJ PRINCIPLES</i>	<i>Offender inclusiveness and accountability, individual behavior effects all, all community members are affected by crime. Includes listening more, talking less, being kind, practicing non-violence, stop gossiping</i>	

P11	Impulse awareness	Just thinking before I act. I used to always just act first. Now I understand that I do have a choice to think and make a good decision before just act out rationally and end up somewhere I don't want to be.
P12	Non-violence	...just being in this class learning how to be assertive um and how to talk instead of um result to violence I guess I learned most from this class.
P10	Listen more	Yeah, just to listen more instead of just talking so much.
P15	Offender inclusiveness	She stood out the most because she took the time to explain things and she let us like role-play whatever I guess and she let us see how it worked, man.
P9	Circle process	So I guess where I was going with that is it just taught me to pay attention to certain things and she does this thing with plates and she would sit us down in a circle and I think one of the cool things she taught me was to sit in a circle and pay attention to others

Note. Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy. (Wilson, 2016)

Curriculum Vitae

CHRISTINA R. WILSON

801-690-3766 | Cwilson2@nova.edu

EDUCATION

Nova Southeastern University

Ph. D Conflict Resolution Studies 2016

Dissertation: "Unshackled: A phenomenological study of the effects of holistic conflict resolution training on inmate self-efficacy

University of Utah

Post Graduate Certificate 2008

Conflict Resolution

Weber State University

MS Criminal Justice 2003

Weber State University

BS Sociology 1999

Minor in Psychology

AWARDS

Spirit of Engagement Award, *Nova Southeastern University* 2014

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Weber State University

Adjunct Professor – "Conflict and Communication Dynamics in Corrections" 2012

Developed syllabus and course structure and administered grades.

Teaching Assistant – to Professor Toran Hansen in "Negotiations" 2012

Worked with five assigned masters and Ph.D. students, answering questions and participating in electronic message board assignments.

Teaching Assistant – to Professor Marcia Sweedler in "Human Factors" 2011

Worked with five assigned masters and Ph.D. students answering questions, posting comments on electronic message board assignments, coordinating online assignments and reviewing assignments.

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Trainer/Consultant**Davis County Jail****2013-present**

I created and teach a 12-session conflict resolution and communication course for inmates call *Reaching Out With Purposeful Engagement Skills* or ROPES. This is a holistic approach to conflict resolution which prepares participants to communicate effectively which includes emotional intelligence, active listening, meta-cognition, impulse control, and empathy.

Trainer/Consultant**Upon request****2011 – Present**

I provide consultation and training for a variety of organizations including Davis County Sheriff's, Davis County Management Teams, Davis County Leadership, USDA Forest Service, and Ph. D students and professors. Training themes include emotional intelligence in the workplace, assertiveness training, active listening, dealing with difficult people, mediation, de-escalation, and circle dialogue processes.

Program Coordinator**Juvenile Court****2006-2011**

Duties included running five programs for Second District Juvenile Court which included work crews, victim/offender and truancy mediation, mentoring, working as an education liaison, and overseeing the court's intern/volunteer program.

Probation Officer**Juvenile Court****1999-2006**

Duties included supervising juvenile offenders in the community including creating and implementing treatment and correctional plans, providing written reports to the court, and monitoring court orders.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

"Mind Over Matter"

Association of Conflict Resolution Annual Conference
Reno, Nevada

2015

"Circle Processes"

Council on Conflict Resolution Annual Conference
Salt Lake City, Utah

2015

- “Restorative Justice Talking Circles*
Nova Southeastern University Residential Institute
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 2015
- “Leader—Know Thyself: The fundamentals of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution” - Keynote*
Davis County Leadership Conference
Fruit Heights, Utah 2014
- “Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace”*
Davis County Sheriff’s Management
Clearfield, Utah 2014
- “The Emotionally Intelligent Practitioner: Past, Present, and Implications for the Future”*
North West Restorative Justice Conference
Portland, Oregon 2013
- “Creating Community”*
Women’s History Brunch – Inspiring Women to Achieve
Hill Air Force Base, Utah 2013
- “Mediating Fear, Apathy, Insanity, and Dishonesty”*
Utah Council on Conflict Resolution Annual Conference
Salt Lake City, Utah 2012

MEMBERSHIPS

- Utah Council on Conflict Resolution
- American Corrections Association
- Association on Conflict Resolution