AN EXAMINATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG FORMER OFFENDERS
AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND TRUST IN CIVIC
INSTITUTIONS POST-RELEASE

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Hope M. Moore

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AN EXAMINATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG FORMER OFFENDERS
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Hope M. Moore

Dissertation

Approved:

Advisor
Dr. Raymond W. Cox III

Committee Member
Dr. Eunju Rho

Committee Member
Dr. Namkyung Oh

Committee Member
Dr. Nicholas Zingale

Committee Member
Dr. Valerie Callanan

Accepted:

Interim Department Chair
Dr. John C. Green

Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Chand Midha

Dean of the Graduate School
Dr. Rex D. Ramsier

Date
ABSTRACT

Research on civic engagement has focused on issues associated with social trust, reciprocity, and social norms within contemporary America. However, insufficient research exists in relation to civic engagement among former offenders who are faced with reintegration into communities after incarceration. Additionally, there exists a paucity of research of the perceptions and experiences for returning citizens with regards to trust in civic institutions and their respective communities. This qualitative grounded theory study explored the challenges of returning citizens with respect to social trust, civic engagement, and building social capital after incarceration. The phenomenon was explored by obtaining descriptions of the experiences of local former offenders after incarceration. Semi-structured interviews based on a classic grounded theory inquiry were used to collect data from a sample of 10 individuals in Youngstown, Ohio. Open-ended interview questions were designed to have participants reconstruct their experiences regarding social trust, forming personal networks, and civic engagement within the community. Participants were selected using a convenience sample based on their experience of the phenomenon and willingness to participate in the study. Five themes were developed from the interview data dealing with civic engagement, trust, network, and norms with one emergent theme with relation to the perceptions of service delivery and its linkage with particularized trust in civic institutions. A predominant implication for future research include how social mistrust and inequitable treatment
shapes the experiences and perceptions of returning citizens. Finally, how can public administrators and practitioners integrate the returning citizen into community and civic life?
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Glaze and Bonczar (2008) reported that there were over 2.3 million people imprisoned in a jail, state or federal prison in 2008. In the same year, over 5 million individuals were on probation, parole, or some form of correctional supervision in the United States (Glaze & Bonczar, 2008).

Concerns associated with the physical and psycho-social aspects of incarceration, have prompted debate for policymakers and communities over the degree to which they have enacted or should enact policies that deal with returning citizens. The problem of prisoner reentry is one of the most pressing challenges in American society (Maruna, Immarigeon, & Lebel, 2004; Travis, 2005). With more than 1.6 million individuals held in federal and state corrections facilities (Sabol, West, & Cooper, 2009) and over 12 million individuals with prior felony convictions, successfully integrating this large and growing population has become an urgent priority (Pager & Western, 2009). It is estimated that 735,000 prisoners were released in 2008 (Sabol et al., 2009). The great majority of these prisoners were men who returned to their communities and families, and the United States Department of Justice estimates that over 50% of individuals released from prison will re-offend and return to prison within a three-year period.

These trends in criminal justice stipulate that communities address the issues of reintegration of ex-felons into many communities. Many issues that face former inmates
in their reintegration efforts include the lack of job skills, insufficient education levels, drug and/or alcohol addictions, and housing and transportation issues which represent the typical challenges that individuals face when they are released from prison. In the face of such challenges, it is incumbent upon communities to provide programming and services to those individuals who lack the necessities and basic skills. Reintegration is a challenge for not only those persons released from prisons but also for victims of crime and communities. The two-tiered system of many reentry programs include community control measures (i.e., parole, probation, half-way houses, detention centers, etc.) and reintegration efforts such as the Second Chance Act of 2007 (Harlow, 2003), which was created to address the education, employment, and substance abuse challenges faced by former offenders upon their release. However, very little research examines the embedded social trust that community members and returning offenders have in local institutions and services that provide these services.

Hence, it is for the above mentioned challenges that communities seek approaches that not only address the environmental factors for many who are returning to unstable neighborhoods, but also focus on the underpinnings of social capital to include trust in institutions and services. The social capital literature indicates that most of the impact in the formation of social trust stems from social interactions (social networks) and community characteristics. Formal and informal social interactions characterized in social capital measurements influence community members’ level of trust (Li, Savage, & Warde, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to present a grounded theory of civic engagement that is based upon research that guided the study. For purposes of this
paper, grounded theory is defined as theory generated from data systematically obtained and analyzed through the constant comparative method.

By examining the social networks and trust of returning citizens, the researcher will explain and describe the perceptions of returning citizens related to civic engagement. This chapter contains background information provided to familiarize the reader to the topic and to highlight significant elements in the current literature that support the need for this study. The theoretical framework that guided the study is presented, as well as the significance of the study.

Background

This study examined the role of social trust and social capital as factors that influence participation of recently released offenders in civic engagement and community involvement. The premise of this study was to investigate/examine the challenges experienced by former offenders and the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of voluntary organizations, primarily civic institutions that aid in the reintegration of adults into their local communities. Many theorists have employed social philosophy theories designed to demonstrate how social capital (Coleman, 1988) and social exchange theory (Homans, 1961) have influenced our thinking relative to the way in which these factors help to build trust and reciprocity in communities. According to recent research, social trust decreases transactional costs and thus contributes to economic growth, helps in collective community problem-solving, facilitates civic engagement, and leads to increased effectiveness of service delivery (Fukuyama, 1995; Knack & Keefer, 1997; La Porta et al., 1997; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Contemporary social capital theorists, like such as Coleman, Fukuyama, Bourdieu, Putnam, and Lin, in general, defined social capital as
“the set of trust, institutions, social norms, social networks, and organizations that shape the interactions of actors within a society and are an asset for the individual and collective production of well-being” (Sabatini, www.socialcapitalgateway.org/).

Therefore, as prior research would suggest, social capital research views trust as a cornerstone of social capital (Abreu, 1988; Fukuyama, 1995; Glaesar, Laibson, & Sacerdote, 2000; Uslaner, 2002, 2008). Thus, if there is a link between increased trust and thereby a correlation with an increase in social capital, then it would stand to follow that one could envision an increase in civic engagement at the individual and community level.

Glanville and Bienenstock (2009) asserted that closed, dense networks cannot exist without some form of reciprocity and trust (p. 1513). The argument is that an atmosphere of distrust or weakened social connections cannot foster reciprocity. Moreover, trust and reciprocity are contingent upon the building of social capital. Individuals will not devote resources or time if they perceive there will be no tangible benefit to participation. Dasgupta (1988) argued that if an individual does not trust an agency or organization with which the individual is affiliated, the individual will not trust that entity to fulfill an agreement. The theory of social capital is particularly rooted in the notion of trust, norms, and informal networks and the belief that social relations are valuable resources (Hooghe, 2007). Welch et al. (2005) provided a conceptual framework that explains “Social trust is the mutually shared expectation, often expressed as confidence, that people will manifest sensible, and when needed, reciprocally beneficial behavior in their interactions with others” (Welch et al., 2005, p. 457). The literature
contains few studies that investigate the determinants of trust in institutions by examining social interactions embedded in neighborhood environments.

Therefore, it is useful to establish the attitudes and behaviors of those reintegrating and the experiences of former offenders within the local community and examine how the attitudes of community members vary towards those persons coming back to communities as well as which social factors influence trust in those civic institutions designed to help with reintegration efforts. By seeking the answers, the researcher hopes to uncover the determinants of trust in civic institutions to include policing agencies, probation/parole authorities, nonprofits, and other civic organizations. Investigating the trust that offenders have in civic institutions can help explain the social capital levels of offenders. Additionally, what role do public servants play in helping the returning citizen with ways in which to engage the community in a pre-social manner?

Moreover, the literature contains scant studies of trust in civic organizations relative to former offenders. Many studies focus on the programs and activities at the neighborhood level designed to help offenders with reentry centered on employment, housing, education, and other socio-political factors (Petersillia, 2001, 2003; Travis, 2005). However, there exists a paucity of research that investigates the factors that affect social capital and those factors that can aid in trust building between offenders and local communities.

The next section will discuss the theoretical framework relative social capital, trust, and civic engagement that underpin this exploratory approach that examines the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants that guide this study.
Social Capital

The term itself can be found at least as far back as Jan Jacobs' 1961 work, The Death of Great American Cities. Jacobs developed the idea of social capital in her attention to the process of urban development affects community development. By the 1970s, Pierre Bourdieu was employing the term "social capital" to denote, "The advantages and opportunities accruing to people through membership in certain communities" (quoted in Portes & Landolt 1996). However, many current day scholars use Coleman's definition of social capital to refer to the "The set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person" (1990, p. 300). Thus, recent conceptual innovations explain social capital as a variable that is inherent in the structure of social relationships and networks. It makes likely, "The achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence" (Coleman, 1990, p. 302). However, it is Putnam's further use of the term to understand civic engagement as features of social life such as networks, norms of reciprocity, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1995a, 1995b). Differing in Coleman's explanation that asserts that social capital facilitates group action, Putnam makes use of the term to describe the generative benefits of social capital that can encourage group benefits. The term “social capital” has been used by many theorists (Bourdieu, 1982; Coleman, 1988; Farr, 2004; Putnam, 1995) to explain the concept of civic participation in American life as it relates to the formation of civic groups in the pursuit of desired goals. A theoretical framework for social capital can be viewed from
the standpoint of social norms, networks, as well as reciprocity and social trust. Social capital is a term that can be found almost exclusively in the social sciences. It is a concept that seeks to explain the outcome of collective action through mutual action and support. Invariably social capital stems from the networks that individuals form in the attainment of collective goals. But the term also has its detractors who propose that social capital is ill defined and not easily quantifiable. For example, Lin (2000) conceptualizes the term as quantifiable in both social and economic terms. Lin explains that one's social networks can be valuable in the marketplace and help persons achieve goals personally, civically, and socially. Additionally, that the access to and use of one's personal networks can help individuals achieve goals. Whereas Shultz (1974) and Becker (1961) view human capital as an excess of surplus value of investment in technical skills and knowledge. Bourdieu (1990) envisioned social capital through a lens of cultural resources by which, (Passeron, 1977) defines as a system of dominant cultural values of society that have symbolism and meaning (Jenkins, 1992, p. 104). They explain that education helps to preserve the dominant values by perpetuating or reproducing the salience of the principal culture.

**Social Trust**

Rothstein (2005) posited that increased levels of individual trust beget greater trust in civic institutions which facilitates a greater level of trust in democratic and civic institutions. In this sense, trust in civic and criminal justice organizations is an essential resource necessary to understanding the factors that contribute to a sense of security within communities. Contrary to Putnam's position that it is the prevalence of horizontal, voluntary associations that generate social capital leading to high levels of government institutional performance, Rothstein (2005) argued it is the existence of universal and
trustworthy government institutions that generate social capital in a civil society. Conversely, Rothstein argued that corrupt or dysfunctional government institutions destroy civil social capital. Rothstein seemed to assume that “trustworthy” government institutions have high levels of trust from civil society towards such government institutions and are also “functional” in having high levels of performance. More importantly, Rothstein asserted that before government institutions become trusted by civil society, a process must occur for the government institution to switch from low to higher institutional performance before civil society will have higher levels of trust towards government institutions.

Rothstein provided further explanation by stating:

Ideas and discourses, like culture, exist, quite simply inherited from history, while collective memories are always produced. This approach tells us that trust in public institutions is not determined by the existing culture; it is instead something that is built or destroyed through the real experiences of citizens in their dealings with the institutions and through the image as collective memory that political actors manage to establish. (2005, p. 165)

Rothstein observed that there should be a positive association between trust by citizens toward government institutions and trust of the citizenry toward each other (i.e., civil social capital). His argument was that if there is trust towards such government institutions as the courts and police (i.e., collective memory from civil society towards those government institutions), essentially, one can expect an increase level of trust by individuals in society in general. Rothstein stated that collective memory is not based upon the institutions in general, but rather the collective memory towards the institution with regard to “its historically established reputation in regard to fairness and efficiency” or “the collective memory about the actual operations of the institutions” (2000, p. 493). Rothstein’s theory on social capital differs from Putnam’s in that Rothstein posited that it
is the collective memory of citizens that establishes and defines the level of trust in civic institutions which drives social capital. Whereas Putnam attributed the level of social capital in society as one dictated by the historical development and the numbers of voluntary associations that explained variations in governmental performance, Rothstein argued that strategic decisions made by political actors can either enhance or destroy civil social capital.

Two recent studies clarified the processes underlying the relationship between trust, cooperation, and equality. The studies experimentally tested the influence of resource distributions on the formation of trust and intentions to cooperate; the study found that individuals receiving a deficit of resources evidenced lower levels of social capital (i.e., trust and cooperation) than did individuals receiving equal amounts. The study also revealed that individuals who perceived unequal resource distributions experienced disengagement and distrust of others (Cozzolino, 2011). Thus, when we explicate the factors related to trust, a useful definition is offered by Kassebaum states,

Interpersonal trust is an expectation about a future behaviour of another person and an accompanying feeling of calmness, confidence, and security depending on the degree of trust and the extent of the associated risk. That other person shall behave as agreed, un-agreed but loyal, or at least according to subjective expectations, although she/he has the freedom and choice to act differently, because it is impossible or voluntarily unwanted to control her/him. That other person may also be perceived as a representative of a certain group. (Kassebaum, 2004, p. 21)

The premise of this study will be to develop a theory about the process of civic engagement among former offender. The research examines the challenges experienced by former offenders as they are engaging with voluntary organizations, primarily civic institutions that aid in the reintegration of adults into their local communities. Many theorists have employed social philosophy theories designed to demonstrate how social
capital (Coleman, 1988) and social exchange theory (Homans, 1961) have influence on thinking relative to the way in which these factors help to build trust and reciprocity in communities. According to recent research, social trust decreases transactional costs and thus contributes to economic growth, helps in collective community problem-solving, facilitates civic engagement, and leads to increased effectiveness of service delivery (Fukuyama, 1995; Knack & Keefer, 1997; La Porta et al., 1997; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Contemporary social capital theorists, like such as Coleman, Fukuyama, Bourdieu, Putnam, and Lin, in general, defined social capital as “the set of trust, institutions, social norms, social networks, and organizations that shape the interactions of actors within a society and are an asset for the individual and collective production of well-being” (Sabatini, www.socialcapitalgateway.org/).

Putnam (2000) argued that increased participation by citizens in the political, cultural, and social spheres of civic life can add vigor to the democratic processes of government and thus help to increase trust in political institutions. However, as Putnam observed, civic participation is on the decline in America and trust in government is diminishing. Putnam argued that without social trust and cohesion, civic participation and thus social capital decrease. Putnam observed, “The more we connect with other people, the more we trust them, and vice versa” (Putnam, 1995, p. 665). For a community, frequent cooperation by its members is expected to lead to tighter social linkages and increased trust in one another. Support for this idea can be found in experimental research focusing on iterative prisoner's dilemma games—cooperation begets trust, which leads to further cooperation (Axelrod, 1984). Although determining the flow of causation outside the laboratory is theoretically and methodologically complex, Brehm and Rahn (1997)
reported evidence that suggests it flows mainly from participating. Etzioni (1994)
provided a contrasting view that assesses civic engagement through a communitarian
lens, which favors a new sort of social contract by community members that emphasizes
the restoral of social bonds that emphasize our collective responsibility to each other and
our respective communities. Etzioni posited that social control among members of
communities can lessen the involvement by the state. This is a salient argument as
Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) suggested, individuals who believe that most others can be
trusted will consequently will be more apt to trust political institutions, and thus be more
inclined to participate in civic organizations and activities (as cited in Uslaner, 2005).
Uslaner differentiated between particularized trust, which is derived from direct
experience or stereotypes of others, as opposed to generalized trust, which is a faith in
persons who are different from ourselves. This type of trust is developed with strangers,
and for people with whom we do not have any direct experience. It is this particularized
trust that is the focus of this study as it relates to increasing social capital. Trusting people
are more apt to take risks on the part of the whole because of a belief in a shared vision.
Trusting individuals are more apt to volunteer, increase donations to charity, and increase
their participation in civic causes. As researchers have argued, because of the declining
trust in political institutions and individuals specifically, this has led to a decrease in
feelings of social capital among individuals. This is especially challenging for former
offenders who return to communities that may be less than welcoming. Uslaner (2002)
observed when there is an inequality of resources, both financial and social, that feelings
of distrust are more prevalent. It is for this reason that communities and political
organizations could benefit from decreasing inequality in general, but it is especially
helpful to build social networks among offenders with the local community with an eye toward building a more egalitarian society.

The social capital literature suggests that the building of social networks that facilitate both bonding and bridging capital (Putnam, 2003) helps to build stable networks, increases trust and reciprocity, and thus strengthens civic engagement. It is with this conceptual framework in mind that it is useful to provide an explanation for each of these components that help to build and increase networks and build social capital.

However, few of these studies attribute the source of discrepancies between communities in which former offenders reside and the lack of trust in civic institutions. Therefore, not many studies have examined the role of generalized trust in civic organizations from the perspectives of the returning citizen.

It is necessary to examine how social capital and trust influence the ways in which offenders and marginalized populations can help foster a sense of community. Many in marginalized communities experience a “disconnect” when reintegrating into a larger community. Western (2002) further examined this phenomenon through the exclusion theory, which explains the marginalization of certain groups from society that can hinder social integration into the wider community. Social exclusion may be a deterrence to reentry in terms of ex-offenders’ lack of access to job opportunities, restrictions on formal assistance (e.g., student aid, housing, racism, class discrimination, and the disenfranchisement) that arises from a felony conviction (Petersilia, 2003; Uggen, Wakefield, & Western, 2005). A recent phenomenological study (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005) examined the barriers to reentry that young adult men faced, which
included securing employment. Many of the participants expressed feelings that their pathways to legal employment were hampered by their criminal convictions, thus many felt that they needed to resort to their “old ways” of criminal activity in order to earn a living. Moreover, the study participants encountered other feelings about their roles as community members, principal among them was a desire to “give back” to both family members and society, which highlighted their desire for self-efficacy, and their aspiration to become active, productive law-abiding citizens (Arditti et al., 2005). The researchers observed that, “Reentry transition programs could build in giving back opportunities for ex-offenders to volunteer or work in an array of neighborhood and social organizations” (Arditti et al., 2005, p. 13) thereby increasing their networking and social capital assets.

Arneil (2006) posited in her work that there exists this disparity in civic trust among privileged and marginalized groups. Arneil suggested that instead of focusing upon building networks that foster civic trust that we alternatively try to address why there is this imparity in trust. So how precisely do we create trust within communities, especially in diverse or heterogeneous societies? Rothstein (2005) argued that when people are involved in the criminal justice system, they may come to believe that the deck is stacked against them. This is of particular concern because the lack of trust in societal institutions may hinder ex-offenders from investing in those institutions that society in general values. Mistrust breeds malcontent and places vulnerable populations in a situation in which they would tend to withdraw from groups and institutions available to help with their integration into the wider community. Portes (1998) observed that “negative social capital” can emerge when groups feel marginalized from the greater society – utilizing Putnam’s (2000) theory of bonding versus bridging capital – thus
hindering reintegration efforts and increasing the likelihood that the offender may recidivate. Field (2003) posited that trust is integral to relationships because of the belief that one will not exploit their relationships but believe instead that they will benefit from these relationships through cooperative activities. Furthermore, it is for this reason that we have to unravel the link between the various conceptual understandings of trust, as Dasgupta and Serageldin (2000) argued, “it is not easy to model the link between personal, groups, and institutional trust. It is with this reference going forward that we can understand the relationship between individuals as they work to construct a social reality either with each other, an institution or system. The next section will outline the determinants of trust from the vantage point of individuals as they encounter the criminal justice system.

**Procedural and Distributive Justice**

A component of social trust is the perceived fairness of the criminal justice system by former offenders. The literature that examines trust deals with two important aspects of trust relative to the legal system, procedural and distributive justice. Research relative to adult offenders has taught us that *process* does matter. Research with citizens (Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Huo, 2002) as well as misdemeanor (Tyler, 1984) and felony (Tyler, Casper, & Fisher, 1989) defendants has shown that perceived procedural fairness predicts broader attitudes toward the law. Tyler (1990) has demonstrated that the perceived fairness of outcomes leads to law-abiding behavior. These beliefs influence satisfaction with case result (Tyler et al., 1989) acceptance of court decisions (Tyler & Huo, 2002). Adult offenders have more positive feelings toward the police and court proceedings and generally display a more positive view toward case resolution when they
perceive the process as being fundamentally fair. Additionally, they report that they are more inclined toward law-abiding behavior.

Tyler (1990) and Tyler and Wakslak (2004) have argued that, in contrast to an instrumental deterrence model to crime control, a normative model that emphasizes adherence toward the legitimacy of process is more effective in crime deterrence. A deterrence model alone is not enough to deter crime; instead, a model of internal control that stresses law-abiding behavior is needed. Tyler argued that to do so, individuals must view the law and legal authorities as legitimate and deserving of support. Lind and Tyler (1988) explicated those factors that most influence the perceptions of procedural justice. Based on the social identity model Lind and Tyler (1988) emphasized the importance of membership and the value of social ties and that these ties are influential to peoples’ behavior. Akin to Rothstein (2005), the group value model emphasizes that individuals experience the legal system as part of a group and at the individual level, perceptions and judgments are constantly being “updated” by each new encounter. Tyler et al. (1989) identified four factors that influence fairness: (a) voice – the opportunity to have one’s case heard; (b) trust – the belief that the legal system will treat an individual in a fair and equitable manner; (c) standing – the feeling that as a member of a group, individuals can expect to be treated respectfully; and (d) neutrality – that decisions will be made in a factual and non-biased fashion. Moreover, (Rawls, 1971) offers two principles of distributive justice, the first affirms that all persons have basic liberty; and the second grants the greatest benefit to the least members of society. Additionally, he advocates a fair equality of opportunity, an egalitarian approach, which gives even the least advantaged individuals equal distribution of both the social and political goods in society
These ideals are based upon a social contract by which all members have the same rights and privileges regardless of social or political standing. A key component of social exchange theory is the norm of distributive justice (Homans, 1958). This affirms that a fair exchange is sustained through equitable investments and outcomes. Therefore, decision-making is an independent assessment of what we are willing to invest and what rewards we want to obtain. It is important to examine the role social capital and trust influence the ways in which offenders and marginalized populations can help foster a sense of community in addressing policing issues and other community problems.

Western (2002) further examined this phenomenon through the exclusion theory, which explains the marginalization of certain groups from society can hinder social integration into the wider community. Social exclusion may be a deterrence to reentry in terms of ex-offenders’ lack of access to job opportunities, restrictions on formal assistance (e.g., student aid, housing, racism, class discrimination, and the disenfranchisement) that arises from a felony conviction (Petersilia, 2003; Uggen, Wakefield & Western, 2005). Researchers observed that, “Reentry transition programs could build in giving back opportunities for ex-offenders to volunteer or work in an array of neighborhood and social organizations” (Arditti et al., 2005, p. 13) thereby increasing their networking and social capital assets.

Moreover, Arneil (2006) posited in her work that there exists this a disproportionate level of civic trust among privileged and marginalized groups. Arneil suggested that instead of focusing upon building networks that foster civic trust that we alternatively try to address why there is this difference in trust. So how precisely do we create trust within communities, especially in diverse or heterogeneous societies?
Rothstein (2005) argued that when people are involved in the criminal justice system, they may come to believe that the deck is stacked against them. This is of particular concern because the lack of trust in societal institutions may hinder ex-offenders from investing in those institutions that society in general values. Mistrust breeds malcontent and places vulnerable populations in a situation whereby they would tend to withdraw from groups and institutions available to help with their integration into the wider community. Portes (1998) observed that “negative social capital” can emerge when groups feel marginalized from the greater society – utilizing Putnam’s (2000) theory of bonding versus bridging capital – thus hindering reintegration efforts and increasing the likelihood that the offender may recidivate. Field (2003) posited that trust is integral to relationships because of the belief that one will not exploit their relationships but believe instead that they will benefit from these relationships through cooperative activities.

Civic Engagement and the New Public Administration

Robert Dahl (1989) reminds us that, by definition, democracy involves a diverse collection of people, beliefs, traditions, processes, and structures that come into play when public decisions are made. In such a milieu, public administrators are required not only to address the traditional concerns of organizational management, policy development, and service delivery, but increasingly, the job of public administrators is to foster citizenship and identify, create, and manage public values. Denhardt (2001) and Mansbridge (1994) further explicate the concepts that underpin civic engagement by explaining how public administrators can best serve the public while promoting the public good. If the Old Public Administration focused on process, objectivity, and efficiency, the New Public Service joins the citizen, and looks for ways in which to
engage the politic in democratic citizenship around shared values. It is with this premise that "the public servant who wants to make a difference in the lives of others", (as cited in Denhardt, 2011, p.165) encourages civic engagement and participation which provides a foundation to discuss the obligation the public administrator has toward the citizen, but also affirms the responsibility of citizens to stay active and involved in the civic activities of their community. Thus, one can ask the question how best can public administrators engage the returning citizen in civic engagement opportunities?

Further, H. George Frederickson insisted that concern for social equity is as important as our preoccupation with efficiency and effectiveness. Frederickson (2010) argued that social equity requires judgment. He explained that social equity is not conveyed in the neutral application of rules, procedures, and laws. Instead, Frederickson argued that, “social equity is where institutions and interpretation shape judgments and outcomes” (p. 65). Frederickson outlined a multifaceted approach to social equity and concluded, “For social equity to be a standard for policy judgment and public action, analysis must move from equality to equalities and equity to equities” (Frederickson, 1990, p. 235). It is to this end that this study is important to public administrators. Public administrators can utilize the findings from this research to help formulate policies and create programming that directly speak to the needs of offenders to reintegrate into society especially as it relates to civic engagement. This study sought to document the factors that inhibit such engagement as well as highlight the factors that can aid researchers and professionals with policy initiatives. As public administrators address these barriers, they can aid former offenders in their reintegration efforts to become a more integral part of society in which their interests and needs can be more accurately
reflected in future reentry initiatives and thereby, provide a context for Frederickson’s third pillar of public administration, the role of social equity as narrative practice.

Moreover, Frederickson (1982) broadened our understanding of participative democracy by explaining that in modern day administration, public administrators’ decision making can be equitable if the decision-making process used to reach conclusions is fair. Fair participatory approaches to decision making Frederickson argues, creates educated, active, and virtuous citizens. Rawls (2005) posited that to breach the gap between public administrators with expert and tacit knowledge and the citizens they serve, they must assume the role of the disadvantaged group in social structures and policies to accommodate inequalities in the system. Rawls posited that if we could envision ourselves in the least advantaged group, we could then seek out solutions to social and political processes that favored us. Rawls employed this argument to appeal to our self-interests while simultaneously highlighting the need to empathize with those who are least advantaged. This rationale has the added benefit to create social policy that does good for the greatest amount of people. Hence, if we can identify those factors that lead to building trust, perhaps we can ameliorate those factors that can impede successful reintegration by offenders. Additionally, a study that explains the perceptions of the returning citizen with concern to social networks, trust, civic engagement and how these concepts have an effect on their reintegration with both the community and civic institutions These efforts can aid criminal justice and other public administrators in their efforts in helping offenders adjust to the expectations of community life. Consequently, this researcher strives to examine the attitudes and perceptions of returning citizens in relation to trust and civic engagement with civic institutions. Additionally, what can civic
institutions do to build trust with the returning citizen and involve the returning citizen in civic activities?

This researcher utilized social capital, trust and civic engagement theorems and applied it to the institutional trust literature in the United States. Earlier studies used communities or neighborhoods as the units of analysis in the measurement of social capital among individuals; however, this study utilized individuals to ask participants to describe their lived experience relative to social trust and civic engagement in their respective communities. It was with the expectation that the researcher sought to both identify and describe the perceptions of returning citizens with the intent of constructing a civic engagement model, or an emergent civic engagement theory grounded in the data.

**Significance of the Study and Relevance for Public Administration**

When criminal justice professionals advocate a rehabilitative approach to the reintegration of offenders into local communities, the focus is often upon what the offending individual can do to make amends to the local community by claiming responsibility for prior criminal bad acts. We pay scant attention to the efforts of local communities to engage those who are reintegrating. The professionalization of the criminal justice system has given society the perception that crime reduction and public safety are strictly the domain of criminal justice professionals. However, Olson and Dzur (2004) posited that the concept of “democratized professionalism” (p. 147) describes the role of public administrators as one in which they are the trustees of the public’s interests. Subsequently, when a lack of sense of trust, reciprocity, and legitimacy exists in these organizations, it can have widespread implications for the reintegration efforts of civic organizations and thwart policing efforts in dealing with former offenders. Hence, if we
can identify those factors that lead to building trust, perhaps we can ameliorate those factors that can impede successful reintegration by offenders. These efforts can aid criminal justice and other public administrators in their efforts in helping offenders adjust to the expectations of community life. Consequently, this researcher strives to examine the attitudes and perceptions of returning citizens in relation to trust and civic engagement with civic institutions. Given how little we know about civic engagement and trust relative to the returning citizen, the researcher used an approach of an exploratory qualitative study in order to develop a theory about former offenders' civic engagement process underpinned by networks, and trust or lack thereof in institutions. Moreover, it is for this reason that we have to unravel the link between the various conceptual understandings of trust, as Dasgupta and Serageldin (2000) argued, “it is not easy to model the link between personal, groups, and institutional trust. However, the link needs to be studied if we are to understand the ideal of social capital” (p. 333).

**Statement of the Problem**

In response to one of the more compelling and contradictory issues of our times, this qualitative study investigates the phenomenon of persons who are released from prison and their return to American society. What inspires such a study is the narrative responses and perceptions of former offenders, or as the advocacy community refers to them, returning citizens that ten ex-offenders' distinctive stories might actually inform the policies of practitioners, administrators and researchers. In an age where there are over 2 million people incarcerated, it is imperative that there is a renewed conversation relative to citizenship and the need for former offenders to "give back" in pro-social ways after incarceration. But, there exists a lack of research of this population
that speaks to the challenges of former offenders to not only engage in civic action, but to explicate those factors that make this more or less likely. We often speak of the former offenders and their debt to society, but neglect to highlight the issues involved with civic engagement, especially as it relates to civic organizations and public administrators. The nature of the problem is multi-dimensional. The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the concepts of social networks (social capital), trust, and civic engagement from the perceptions of the returning citizen. This qualitative study used a grounded theory approach to study the social trust in civic institutions and the community in general. What underlies the phenomena are the roots of networks, and how these networks are accessed to engage in a wider society. Additionally, how do individuals then leverage these networks to engage the wider community? And, finally to identify those opportunities and barriers that affect civic activity on the part of the returning citizen.

Subsequently, when a lack of sense of trust, reciprocity, and legitimacy exists in these organizations, it can have widespread implications for the reintegration efforts of civic organizations and thwart policing efforts in dealing with former offenders. Hence, if we can identify those factors that lead to building trust, perhaps we can ameliorate those factors that can impede successful reintegration by offenders. These efforts can aid criminal justice and other public administrators in their efforts in helping offenders adjust to the expectations of community life.

Social capital, trust, network theory and civic engagement literature were used as the foundation for this study. However, these theorems were not used as explanations but instead guided the general direction of the study and the development of the interview
script. Additionally, these theoretical foundations were used as a context for which to analyze, interpret, present, and write the findings of the study. Moreover, the theorems were meant to connect the findings with existing literature on social capital (network theory), social trust, and civic engagement, or to develop an emergent theory grounded in the data.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Throughout this study, the researcher used some key terms that may be unfamiliar to individuals not familiar with social capital literature. Hence, a description of terms is necessary to highlight some terms that appear throughout this research study.

*Distributive justice* is the fairness of outcome distributions. The equity literature suggests that people care about justice and shape their feelings and actions according to principles of what is fair and unfair (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997, p. 11).

*Political trust* is a sense of shared moral community both political and social, with an agreement on what values a society ought to pursue (Fukuyama, 1995). A further explanation considers if individuals perceive that governments are producing outcomes persistent with their expectations (Coleman, 1988).

*Procedural justice* is defined as the belief in the legitimacy of decision-making processes in governmental institutions that includes agreement with policies and decisions that grow from these processes (Tyler & Belliveau, 1995).

*Reciprocity* is a compelling obligation that reflects the normative standards that sustain exchange (Misztal, 1996).
Reentry refers to the transition of offenders from prisons or jails back into the community. Increasingly, reentry begins at the sentencing phase and continues post-release, with a particular focus on the continuity of care from prison to the community (Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.).

Social capital is defined as the resources embedded in social networks that are accessed and used by actors in social actions; social actions are most likely to occur when norms of trust (mutual expectations that actions taken will be reciprocally beneficial) are present. This definition is based on a network theory of social capital (Lin, 2001).

Social exchange theory is the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons (Homans, 1961, p. 13). Homans’s definition is especially important here because it relies upon the promise of behavioral reinforcement, or lack thereof, in a two-party relation between actors A and B, and how B’s behavior reinforced A’s behavior in return.

Social trust is an individual’s belief concerning how another person will perform and behave on some future occasion. It indicates a willingness to be vulnerable to another party either as a consequence of a belief in a partner’s good intent, belief in their competence and capability, belief in their reliability, or belief in their perceived openness (Nahapit & Ghoshal, 1998).

Organizational Map of the Study

Chapter I -- Introduction summarizes the broader concepts of social capital and trust, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, and the purpose of the study are stated in this chapter. In Chapter II -- Theoretical Foundation, the theoretical reasons for social capital indicators to influence individual trust level through a thorough
review of applicable literature are presented. Chapter III -- Methodology provides the explanation of data, methods, and analyses. This chapter discusses the research design, data collection, data analysis, assumptions and limitations.

Chapter IV -- discusses the findings of the grounded theory approach. This chapter discusses in narrative form the experiences of the participants centered on the key themes of the study. Chapter V -- discusses implications, recommendations, limitations, and conclusions of the study.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL
AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The following chapter discusses the origins of social capital and the current landscape of social capital, network, trust, and civic engagement theory. The first section provides an overview of the historical roots of social capital literature. The second section reviews contemporary social capital literature that discusses the components of networks, trust, and reciprocity. Alternative models of trust are introduced to determine the ability of these models to extend our understanding of social capital in relation to former offenders. Section three discusses some criticisms of social capital and problems with measurement. Further, democratic governance is discussed as the cornerstone of civic engagement against the backdrop of the old positivist paradigm juxtaposed against the current thinking, commonly referred to as the New Public Service.

Introduction

The term “social capital” has been used by many theorists (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Farr, 2004; Putnam, 1995b) to explain the concept of civic participation in American life as it relates to the formation of civic groups in the pursuit of desired goals. The apparatus in which social capital can be viewed is from the standpoint of social norms, networks, as well as reciprocity and social trust. These elements work in
coordination to facilitate social action toward a communal goal. James Farr observed that the term social capital has various and not altogether coherent meanings when one is attempting to categorize what the term means as a conceptual framework. Farr posited that there exists disagreement about the proper use of the term social capital and attempts to provide a theoretical framework as theorized by (Coleman, 1988; Loury, 1977; Bourdieu, 1988). Social capital is a term that is found almost exclusively in the social sciences. It is a concept that seeks to explain the outcome of collective action through mutual action and support. Invariably, social capital stems from the networks that individuals form in the attainment of collective goals. However, the term also has its detractors who propose that social capital is ill defined and not easily quantifiable. Much debate exists about the usefulness of such a term to describe social relations especially as the term has spilled over into discussions about economic theories. Each developed perspective brings a nuanced understanding of social capital. Accordingly, to fully appreciate the different theoretical positions, we should understand the histories each theorist draws to form their rationales.

**Background**

Alexis de Tocqueville framed the introductory discussion of social capital by examining civic associations in American life. Perhaps this is an appropriate place to start. One cannot understand the term social capital unless one examines those associations that include civic participation and the exercise of social norms in the creation of social trust and reciprocity to achieve communal goals. De Tocqueville expressed great interest in the associations that Americans formed and believed that the United States was different in its orientation towards civic participation and civic action.
De Tocqueville observed that the aristocratic nature of many European countries in the 19th century did not lend itself to the democratic principles to include equality and were absent in the civic formations he observed in Europe (de Tocqueville, 1945, p 107). De Tocqueville offered that because of the communal nature of civic life in America that associations were easily formed and that any individual regardless of his/ her title or station could freely participate in and engage in social action to affect the outcome of communal goals to include the building of infrastructure, missionary outreach to the poor, and political action. De Tocqueville observed that in European countries action and political resources were controlled by the elites and observed that these associations were forced and limited in their effectiveness long term. He was struck by the voluntary and equitable nature of associations in America and that these associations were ingrained in everyday life. He argued that in lieu of private aristocratic control those voluntary associations could stand in the breach to affect change. De Tocqueville posited that a decentralized government such as is present in America allowed the state to exercise control at the local level and encouraged participation by those willing to volunteer and participate in civic as well as political life (de Tocqueville, 1945). He observed that individuals by themselves are powerless but in large numbers they can affect change. It is through these associations that civic participation is encouraged and social trust and reciprocity can be seen in action. De Tocqueville viewed America through a lens that stressed cooperation and social trust in not only the building of political associations but in everyday relationships. He expressed that civic participation and associations became a habit that individuals used to meet goals and thus free association was practiced and seen as legitimate in the pursuit of shared goals. It is with this sentiment in mind that de
Tocqueville stated, “The power of association has reached its uttermost development in America” (1945, p. 479). He theorized that when communal responsibility is overshadowed by an obtrusive central government that in such cases, government can become distanced from the citizenry. Accordingly, responsibility is shifted away from the citizen and the entire community suffers. Many social capital theorists draw upon de Tocqueville’s observations and conclusions.

De Tocqueville, similar to Putnam, stressed the social value of civic association in modern day America. Akin to de Tocqueville, Verba (1989) observed how Americans spent their free time and the quantity of time citizens devoted to civic and recreational activities. Social trust is a central theme in de Tocqueville and Verba’s work in that they observe that Americans possess a higher level of social trust and cooperation than other democracies (Verba, 1989, p. 216). Social trust is inherent to the process of cultivating social capital. Americans in large part value their social relationships and a component of these relationships is trust. It is the social norms of cooperation, trust, and friendship that individuals can foster purposive action in getting things done. Social capital cannot flourish in an environment of mistrust and noncooperation.

**The Forms of Social Capital**

Coleman (1988) conceptualized social capital as fundamentally rational. Coleman rejected the values of individuality by reducing social capital to economic rational choice. His work examined human capital in the creation of social capital as it relates to “obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms”. (Coleman, 1988, p. 95). Coleman stated: “If we begin with a theory of rational action, in which each actor has control over certain resources and interests in certain resources and events, the social
capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor” (p. S98). Coleman posited that it is the relationships among people engaged in activity that can foster change. He posited that individuals bring resources in terms of their education, recognition, vast networks, etc. to the table to produce activity, otherwise referred to as human capital. Physical capital is material changes and the necessary tools needed to facilitate production. Coleman’s work emphasized human and physical capital that in combination facilitates social capital. Social capital is less tangible (less measurable) but also facilitates productive activities. Coleman posited that social capital can take three forms: 1) Social structures, 2) Social channels, and 3) Social norms. Coleman (1988) in theorizing about social structures stated

This form of social capital depends on two elements: trustworthiness of the social environment, which means that obligations will be repaid, and the actual extent of obligations held. Social structures differ in both these dimensions, and actors within the same structure differ in the second. (p. 102)

Interpersonal trust is a form of social capital that relies upon the associations in which people in social relationships issue ‘credit slips’ to one another, representing social obligations and providing some insurance against shirking (Claibourn & Martin, 2000, p. 268). Self-sufficiency and the number of obligations are co-variants to the cooperation necessary to fulfill commitments. Social channels or information channels refer to the types of use of social relation in the acquisition of information and knowledge. Social norms establish the rules and regulations by which individuals interact. Adherence to these prescriptions can be a mediating mechanism that imposes social control and prevents defiance. Coleman’s work in summary views social capital as a valuable controlling agent that is useful in creating formal institutional obligations.
Francis Fukuyama

Fukuyama is an economist and defines social capital as “an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals” (Fukuyama, 2001, p. 7). In comparison to Coleman, Fukuyama stressed the informality of social relations as purely self-interested. Where Coleman examined social capital from an institutional or formal viewpoint, Fukuyama posited that it is our proclivity for selfishness in which social capital emerges in an organic fashion. Coleman emphasized the collective responsibility of our formal networks that worked in concert with cooperation and trust to produce desired outcomes. To which Fukuyama retorted, “This is clearly wrong: since cooperation is necessary to virtually all individuals as a means of achieving their selfish ends, it stands to reason that they will produce it as a private good” (Fukuyama, 2001, p. 8). It is this assertion that emphasizes social capital as a natural outgrowth of attaining one’s objectives. For Fukuyama, group solidary is often formed at the expense of some “out-group” members. He argued that it is natural to divide the world into people who can and cannot help us achieve our desired goals.

Pierre Bourdieu

Bourdieu examined the forms of social capital by introducing economic theory as an attribute of social capital in maximizing economic benefit. Bourdieu posited that when human capital is exercised in the creation of monetary wealth that other forms of capital are ignored because one cannot see the immediate results of what is to be produced. In other words, one cannot always predict the outcome by a set of narrowly defined inputs. He argued that in the production of human capital (individual financial resources and education) that by-products are created upon which persons could trade upon in the
future. These “connections” are useful in converting human capital that could result in an economic benefit to the individual (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). Bourdieu wrote about the different forms of capital but for the purposes of this paper the subject will be limited to his theories concerning social capital. Bourdieu described social capital as “membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 7). It is interesting that in this context Bourdieu sought to explain the term in economic terms unlike other theorists that focused upon strictly sociological forces in talking about social capital.

Bourdieu viewed social capital through an economic prism in which individuals not only owned the means of production but employed them in the production of desired goals. He used the term “credit” to refer to something that can be employed to receive something in return (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu sought to explain social capital from an exchange theory paradigm in which time, money, etc. can be used in the marketplace to receive something of value. He went on to explain that not only must one have something of value to exchange but the number of networks, or as de Tocqueville would affirm “associations” that one could mobilize, would have an effect on what not only he/she possessed but the networks others possess. In other words, one could not only use his/her own connections but the connections of others either in proximity or at a distance in the attainment of individual goals. Therein lies a multiplier effect of an individual who can access the resources of others which can sustain a viable network that one can then trade upon. The more networks one has, the more social capital one has. Bourdieu observed that by attaining social relationships that one could then receive something of value
important to the recipient either at present or in the future. He observed that social relationships are affirmed and reaffirmed so that members of the group have not only a prolonged interaction with one another but also a consistent connection that fosters social cooperation and trust. These shared values are again present in the literature as inherent values in the production of social capital.

Social capital involves the investment of time, money, cooperation, trust, reciprocity, etc. in the present and future in order to attain any appreciable results. One could amass considerable useful connections in the pursuit of economic resources or even cultural resources over an extended period of time. Bourdieu observed that the creation of social capital acts as currency. One creates wealth by not only his/her initial investment but by the multiplier of added monies in the pot. Bourdieu argued that social capital operates in the same way in which one can access prestige, name recognition, acknowledgement from not only individuals within the immediate group but by those individuals connected to the group. Thus, this is a powerful network from which one can receive some form of benefit. The group also socially controls the behavior of individual group members by establishing social norms for participation, and the threat of excommunication is always present for those found to be in violation of group and social norms; the network acts as a mediating effect on the group membership that facilitates social trust and reciprocity.

**Robert Putnam**

Putnam popularized the term “social capital” in his seminal work, *Bowling Alone*, *the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, which examined the decline of civic participation and thus the decline of social capital in America. Putnam explored in his
seminal work that social capital is a by-product of civil engagement in society. Putnam focused on collective action in the pursuit of desired goals. He as well as Coleman, Bourdieu, and Hannifan suggested that social trust and reciprocity are inherent in collective networks that seek to build social capital. Putnam offered that the existence of social capital can go a long way in addressing the social ills of society. More recently political scientist Robert Putnam has assumed a central place in considerations of social capital. Putnam (2000) asserted that the “core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value” (p. 19). He first defined social capital as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (1993, p. 167), and then later refined this to “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (2000, p. 19). Putnam’s definition is clearly reflective of Coleman and Bourdieu’s earlier attempts. In fact, in an exhaustive review of the existing social capital literature, Durlauf and Fafchamps (2004) provided an articulate summary:

We can distinguish [in the existing literature] three main underlying ideas: (1) social capital generates positive externalities for members of a group; (2) these externalities are achieved through shared trust, norms, and values and their consequent effects on expectations and behavior; (3) shared trust, norms, and values arise from informal forms of organizations based on social networks and associations. The study of social capital is that of network-based processes that generate beneficial outcomes through norms and trust. (p. 5)

**Recent Conceptual Innovations**

Although Putnam’s treatment of social capital is predominantly in accordance with previous social capital theorists, he made an important departure by asserting that, unlike Coleman and Bourdieu, who examined social capital collectively, social capital is
to be understood as the social ties, connections, networks, and norms from which individuals and collectivities benefit. Putnam asserted that social capital is both a private and public good that benefits not only the individuals making investments in social networks but also to the wider community (Portes, 2000). Thus, Putnam provided an understanding of social capital, as when he stated that that “where trust and social networks flourish, individuals, firms, neighborhoods, and even nations prosper” (2000, p. 319).

Akin to de Tocqueville, Putnam believed that civic participation and the free association of citizens engaged in political or social action is the earmark of a vibrant democracy. However, as Putnam observed civic participation is on the decline in America and trust in government is diminishing. Putnam argued that without social trust and cohesion, civic participation and thus social capital is lessened. Putnam also discussed the dimensions of social capital that include both bridging and bonding capital. He asserted that the dimensionality of social capital is not an either-or proposition, but instead is a conceptual framework for which we can compare different forms of social capital.

It is worth noting that when we speak of social capital, we almost exclusively think of bonding capital. Bonding capital is the concept derived from homogeneous groups engaged in communal efforts of a shared goal (Putnam, 2000). One can cite various examples of people from the same socio-economic background and shared values engaged in activities to suit their mutual benefit – like reading circles. In addition, bridging capital can be found among heterogeneous groups who share a communal goal. Putnam claimed that bridging social capital spans “diverse social cleavages” while
bonding social capital reinforces exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. de Souza Briggs (2003) added that “[b]y connecting persons and other social ‘sites’ with distinct traits, [bridging] ties often constitute bridges across roles, status differences, material and symbolic interests, space, norms, and even worldviews” (p. 2). Speaking generally, Putnam (2000) told us that

[b]onding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. . . . Bridging networks, by contrast are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. . . . Bonding social capital is, as Xavier de Souza Briggs puts it, good for “getting by”, but bridging social capital is crucial for “getting ahead.” (p. 22)

Therefore, according to existing literature, while bonding social capital is geared towards enabling survival, bridging is oriented to moving ahead.

A major weakness in previous studies of civic engagement has been the very minor role of diverse groups to include ethnicity and race. This could be due in part to the fact that civic engagement, as defined by Putnam (1995, 2000, 2005a), is encapsulated in a language of majority; it is most easily understood and measured by the white majority citizenry (Hero, 2003). There needs to be some examination of the relationship between social capital and inequality. Wilkenson and Pickett (2009) stated, “Does inequality create low levels of trust, or does mistrust create inequality?” (p. 54). Putnam (2000) viewed community and inequality as ‘mutually reinforcing’, with a causal relationship shown in both directions (p. 359). Conversely, theorists such as Uslaner (2002) and Bo Rothstein (2005) have argued that it is inequality that has a compelling effect on trust, instead of the reverse. They posited that equality is closely related to increased trust in civic institutions.
Additionally, Astone, Nathanson, Schoen, and Kim (1999) explained social capital and by extension those resources obtained by employing social capital as a resource that can either decrease or increase which is dependent upon one’s networks (Astone et al., 1999). Astone et al. examined the concept as those human relationships and those relational elements that can be sustained, increased, or depleted over time. Astone et al. examined the relationship between social capital and how it is obtained by individuals. At an individual level, persons go about acquiring the resources to sustain their economic and social opportunities. This activity is distinct from participation in a group setting. Astone et al. argued that social capital first starts at an individual level and then is expanded outward towards group membership. The types and amounts of resources obtained are dependent upon the group. Not all groups share the same ability to access resources. For example, formerly incarcerated persons seeking to gain housing and employment must rely upon social networks they form outside of the group. It is conceivable that another member could have access to these connections but realistically they have the same barriers to access as other group members. Group members in this respect are homogeneous in nature in that they share a common criminal justice status and barriers to reintegration into the wider society. Arneil (2006) observed diverse communities experience a lack of trust and this affects how members interact with the wider community ahead, development, and growth.

One of the principal components of social capital is the concept of social exchange (reciprocity). Cook and Emerson (1978) defined positive social exchange as exchange that is contingent upon receiving something of value in return. Cook and Emerson focused upon the value of commitment in the discussion of social exchange.
theory and posited that this concept is inherent in social relations which is absent in economic exchange theory as discussed by Coleman. Reciprocal relationships in social exchange whether familial or friendship are central to the concept of reciprocity. Coleman’s (1986) work asserted that social capital is at work in both homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. In other words, dissimilar groups can work together in the achievement of desired goals.

Glanville and Bienenstock (2009) suggested that dispersed social networks serve a broad appeal that emphasizes cooperation across social groups; these dispersed groups are more beneficial for “searching for and obtaining resources not presently possessed” (Lin, 2001, p. 7). This same theme is apparent in Putnam’s work when he affirms that bridging capital is that capital that is inherent in diverse groups who work toward a collective goal. His work makes use of the terms “bridging” and “bonding” capital in which the term bridging refers to those activities that enable an individual to accomplish goals through their networks or connections to others. Bonding capital is an individual’s ability to facilitate the building of trust among individuals and within groups (Putnam, 1995a). Farr emphasized the communal nature of relationships in forming social networks. He noted that trust is essential to group formation and integral to the creation of social capital. Farr attributed the term “social capital” as first appearing in the work by L. J. Hannifan in a 1916 article he wrote chronicling the development of social capital in a rural, West Virginia community (Farr, 2008, p. 11). Farr offered that Hannifan borrowed from Dewey’s interpretation of social capital to mean those shared associations among persons that constituted a community acting in concert to produce a desired action (Farr, 2004, p. 16). Dewey also discussed in his earlier work the idea of compassion in
the exercise of social capital. He emphasized one must have empathy for another in order to engage in cooperation and he stressed that members are mindful of their similarities versus differences. Bourdieu described social capital as “membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 7). It is interesting that in this context Bourdieu sought to explain the term in economic terms unlike other theorists to include Putnam that focused upon strictly sociological forces in talking about social capital.

Social Capital and the Formation of Networks

Inherent in any network are the attributes of trust and reciprocity, cohesion, and the ties or bonds between members. The term network originates in mathematics whereby a network contains a set of objects (in mathematical terms, nodes) and a mapping or description of relations between the objects or nodes. The simplest network contains two objects, 1 and 2, and one relationship that links them (Kadushin, 2004). A social network is one described as “an intertwined mesh and connections through which individuals are bound together” (Scott, 1988, p. 110).

Wasserman and Faust (1994) provided a framework in which to analyze network theory to include 1) actors and their actions are interdependent not independent from other network members, 2) relational ties form links between the members which facilitate the flow of information or resources between members, 3) networks focus upon the interaction between members and their perception of the greater environment and to the extent the network provide opportunities or constraints for individual action, and 4)
network models conceptualize structure (economic, social, political, etc.) as enduring patterns relationships among actors.

To present a model of network theory one must first define the level of analysis, examine the attributes necessary for the network to survive, explain the interaction or (ties) among members, examine the centrality (power) of actors within the network and examine the process of network formation and action. Pierre Bourdieu posited that closed, dense relationships between members of a network foster a sense of cohesion and trust (Bourdieu, 1988). Social network theory seeks to not only explain the relationship of members within the network but the nature of the ties between them. Mark Granovetter in his seminal work, *The Strength of Weak Ties* (1973) explored that ties are not only present between members within a network but that these ties are influential in the ability of diverse members to share information within and outside of the network. Information sharing allows members to gain resources and facilitate group identity. Central to the concept of network theory is the emphasis of the relationship between trust and reciprocity between group members in the ability to either gain resources for the group or to mobilize these resources.

As George Simmel noted in his work, *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations* (1955), it is possible to belong to more than one group but one’s affinity to belong to one group as opposed to other is salient because it is solely dependent upon the social nature of the individual (Simmel, 1955). Glanville and Bienenstock (2009) asserted that closed dense networks cannot exist without some form of reciprocity and trust (p. 1513). An atmosphere of distrust or weakened social connections can’t foster reciprocity. The building of relationships in the long term requires the investment of time and resources.
However, trust and reciprocity are contingent upon the building of social capital. Individuals will not devote resources or time if it is perceived that there will be no tangible benefit to participation. Coleman’s (1988) citation further explained that individuals will not hand over control of resources unless they believe that resources or services will be received in kind. Increased trust builds participation; distrust breeds an environment whereby individuals will not risk their goodwill or economic resources in an activity. Glanville and Bienenstock (2009) observed that generalized reciprocity is found in groups of three or more. Direct one-on-one trust can lead to generalized reciprocity if it is repeatable, consistent, and observable (p. 1514). Group formation and participation give individuals a sense of personal identity and provides a form of social connectedness and control. Individuals subjugate their needs to the goals and objectives of the collective. Fine and Harrington observed that, “Groups define the terms of civic engagement, provide essential resources—such as networks of participants and the construction of identity—and link movements to larger political and cultural themes” (Fine & Harrington, 2004, p. 344).

A Champaign study found that the most enduring predictor of social networks is friendship. The longer the years of friendship the more consistent the reliance and trust among the group members. At a young age, female youth offenders were forced by economic and social factors to rely upon friendships outside of familial relationships. These social networks of youth gang members opened the connections to persons affiliated with friends inside the network. One of the most important findings in this study was when an individual and by extension a community lacks financial resources one’s personal friendships are crucial (Fleisher, 2009).
The next section addresses how these small groups (networks) are formed, the attributes of these groups, how the network establishes an identity and utilizes the nature of networks to mobilize participants toward action.

Fine and Harrington posited that through the acts of “framing” and “mobilizing” that individuals are created into citizens not only of their communities but the greater society as well (Fine & Harrington, 2004). Framing is the act of defining how events are perceived and making sense of an event or situation. Members identify issues and problems that need resolution. These issues are defined in the context of what is important to the group. It is worth noting that depending upon the context, small groups may use their interpretive ability to judge what is or is not a concern to the group.

For example, when we examine offenders post release they often encounter barriers to employment, medical services, and housing. Conceivably, group members would identify those issues in need of resolution and subsequently access the community for those resources helpful in addressing their immediate needs. Fine observed that any group that meets regularly and is involved in problem identification comes to share a collective vision. When lack of cohesion in group decision making is apparent, the group either ceases to exist or encounters strife which makes the attainment of goals difficult. The identification and attainment of group goals are situated in the wider context of society. Mobilization of effort takes place when group cohesion is cemented and works to galvanize group members to provide action and support for group goals. Familiarity of group members has a gravitational effect to which others become involved. Fine posited that rarely do groups encourage the participation of strangers. Group formation creates familiarity and these social ties work to provide not only social cohesion but ties are then
leveraged in support of collective action (Fine & Harrington, 2004, p. 347). It is due to small group formation that accountability is maintained. Social control serves as a function to mitigate the actions of individuals to assert their own self interests. Small groups become a mechanism whereby people have face-to-face interactions and the dynamics of the group are such that members become accountable to one another in the context of shared meanings and objectives.

**Building Networks Through Small Group Formation**

Fine and Harrington (2004) highlighted that small groups through common processes and shared frames of references represent a major strength of small groups’ approach to a civil society. Through these processes small groups of individuals can influence policy at both a micro and macro level. At the micro level, individuals work in concert to address and change their community environment. These small groups can collectively begin to influence decision making and policy implementation at the macro level. It would stand to reason that the national emphasis on criminal justice policy in the area of rehabilitation would be one conducive to the community effort of local policing and prisoner reentry initiatives.

Civic engagement centers on a central activity that follows a predictable set of steps. Community members identify an issue and corral the needed attention, resources, and time to address the problem(s); community members organize their activities in conjunction with other community groups and finally these activities take on a wider significance that can garner greater interest and affect social change. Small groups promote civic engagement by allowing members to act as free agents. Although this seems a contradiction to collective action, free agents are able to offer their individual
talents and resources to a wider cause. Group cohesion reinforces a system of incentives and sanctions. Because of the nature of small groups, members feel accountable to the group due to the direct face-to-face interaction of members. If members fail to participate or actively engage in-group objectives, members can be ostracized and this can serve as a means of social control. The immediate, direct effects of nonparticipation are easy to monitor and correct at this level. Inevitably, group participation can lead to increased participation in other civic activities. “They remind participants of the affective benefits of forgoing individual interest to work cooperatively toward shared civic activities. By providing a structure for affiliation and cohesion, groups offer both a model and a reason for participation in larger social domains (Fine & Harrington, 2004, p. 350).

### Challenges to Building Social Capital in Marginalized Groups

Many theorists have challenged the old public administration as an institution that hampered trust in institutions by citizens. The old bureaucratic paradigm emphasized hierarchical control, depersonalization, and rigid processes that stressed process over outcomes (Perry, 1996). Many argue that a positivist, rational model of public administration helped to disconnect governments and citizens. The recent economic recession along with public pleas of “limited government” triggers citizens to echo the constant refrain that “government is not listening to us.” Especially affected are poor and minority communities, many of whom are caught in a cycle of poverty and unemployment. Bo Rothstein (2005) posited that social cohesion and trust are bonds that can aide public administrators in building investment in public institutions and its processes. The lack of trust in public institutions and administration make problem solving and effective service delivery especially difficult.
Although Lipsky (1980) Goodsell (2003), and others have stressed the importance of administrators and agencies in aiding the poor, elderly, and disenfranchised, there seems to be little political will on both the part of citizens and elected officials to increase those public services that help to decrease economic segregation and inequality. Further complicating citizenship participation are such factors as immigration – both legal and illegal, prisoner reintegration into communities, and increasingly what constitutes citizenship in a legal and civic sense. One could argue in the current political climate that efforts are underway to erode the privilege of citizenship and thus participation by all which leads to the inevitable question, what responsibility, if any, do public administrators have to give a voice to those who either through perception or reality lack one?

The competing interests of the economic, social, and political realities of the bureaucracy have been spoken to by many theorists who observed that since the days when government was wholly concerned with efficiency measures that it has now evolved to serve both the political and social interest of citizens. To appreciate these competing interests one must acknowledge the evolution of public administration from the writings of Woodrow Wilson to modern day theorists. At the dawn of public administration the economic realities of running an efficient government were paramount. As government operations became more complex, government was seen as a tool to satisfy the social and political interests of citizens. These competing interests have underlined the need to balance these interests in an effort to provide good government to the public.
Frederickson (1982) invoked the works of Aristotle in the face of public decision making and stated that public discourse between friends and equals can decide what’s equitable in terms of different members of the community. Frederickson stated that political decision making can only be decided by political dialog. Frederickson went on to posit that in the modern day administration public administrators decision making can be equitable if the decision-making process used to reach conclusions is fair. Fair participatory approaches to decision making Frederickson argued create educated, active, and virtuous citizens. The emphasis in the collaborative model is giving citizens the knowledge and techniques they need to deal with public policy issues and providing an open and nonthreatening forum for deliberation and decision making (Box & Sagen 1998). This model is only one way to enhance substantive democracy, but we focus on it here because it presents a well-developed alternative that could be especially useful and powerful.

Social trust is an inherent factor of social capital. Rothstein (2000) observed that one can find increased social trust among group members when those members are high in not only economic resources but social connections as well. Rothstein argued that when groups are comprised of members with low economic resources, they may feel they have more to lose. One could find that within these groups that social trust is harder to build and sustain. The inability to trust others and institutions could inhibit one’s abilities to build social trust and thus social capital. Social networks devoid of trust cannot be sustained long term. In the case of offenders, although social capital may be low among members, it may be entirely absent when offenders encounter the greater society and its institutions. In the words of Rothstein former offenders may come to believe that the
deck is stacked against them. This is of particular concern because the lack of trust in societal institutions may keep ex-offenders from investing in those institutions that society in general values. Mistrust breeds malcontent and places vulnerable populations in a situation whereby they would tend to withdraw from groups and institutions available to help them to increase both their bonding and bridging capital (Putnam, 2000).

Ulmer (2000) posited that the same processes are present in deviant social networks as are present in traditional networks. Members can learn the values, attitudes, language, and social cues that facilitate their membership within the group. Attitudes that facilitate delinquent behaviors, formation of friendships that support delinquency, and a shared history of delinquency can cement social relationships in advancement of deviant behavior thereby strengthening the bonding capital of individuals versus the bridging capital necessary to form networks outside of the group. Illustrative of this concept is a study that examined the peer effects (criminal capital) among 8,000 juvenile offenders. The researchers found strong evidence of peer effects for burglary, petty larceny, felony and misdemeanor drug offenses, aggravated assault, and felony sex offenses. The study suggested that the influence of peers primarily affects individuals who already have some experience in a certain crime classification (Bayer, Hjalmarsson, & Pozen, 2009).

Hence, similar to traditional social networks individuals may display a favorable attitude towards those who share the same commitment to delinquent or deviant behaviors. As noted earlier, friendship becomes the link between members. The longer the history of friendship between members, the more committed individuals are to their own and collective deviant behaviors. Ulmer argued that through one’s participation in
deviant behaviors one may take on the role of burglar, robber, gang member, etc. (Ulmer, 2000). Individuals can become committed to their roles and take on the identity of one engaged in deviant behavior. Ulmer argued that “continuity in crime derived from attitudes and self-definitions learned through association with deviant definitions, deviant others, and participation in deviant activities” (Ulmer, 2000, p. 323) create self-identity which characterizes continued involvement in crime. Whereas, Coleman focused almost entirely on the components of social capital that help individuals to leverage their social connections into some economic benefit and stressed the value of networks involved in traditional social connections, Ulmer (2000) suggested that these same connections exist outside of these conventional networks that help individuals to attain resources.

Social capital and by extension those resources obtained by employing social capital has been explained in terms that social capital can either decrease or increase depending upon those networks (Astone et al., 1999). Astone examined the relationship between social capital and how it is obtained and stressed the relational elements that can either sustain, decrease or increase over time. At an individual level persons can acquire the resources to sustain their economic and social opportunities. This activity is distinct from participation in a group setting. Astone argued that social capital first starts at an individual level and then is expanded outward towards group membership. The types and amounts of resources obtained are dependent upon the group. Not all groups share the same ability to access resources. For example, formerly incarcerated persons seeking to gain housing and employment must rely upon social networks they form outside of the group. It is conceivable that another member could have access to these connections but realistically they have the same barriers to access as other group members. Group
members in this respect are homogeneous in nature in that they share a common criminal justice status and barriers to reintegration into the wider society. Arneil (2006) observed diverse communities experience a lack of trust and this affects how members interact with the wider community.

Sánchez-Jankowski (2008) conducted a nine-year longitudinal study on the social and civic lives of predominantly Latino and African American poor communities in the United States. He conducted detailed interviews and observed participants in five different settings: public housing projects, barber shops and hair salons, gangs and their meeting spaces, high schools, and small grocery stores. Through years of ethnography and social observation, his findings concluded that these populations distrusted the government.

However, Sánchez-Jankowski determined that the lack of trust did not hamper their access to needed goods and services. Instead, social capital in poor neighborhoods was critical to people getting what was needed in order to obtain jobs, basic necessities, and power (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2008). Sánchez-Jankowski observed that people in these neighborhoods have little confidence that government can deliver on their needs and improve their communities. Instead, individuals relied upon their personal networks to accomplish these goals. His work indicates further study of how this lack of trust affects political participation and, therefore the capability to impact policies.

**Civic Engagement Literature**

As Putnam explained civic engagement, it is the involvement of individuals in social and political activities that attach people to society and can influence multiple spheres of society at the individual, local, state, and federal levels (Putnam, 2000).
Additionally, Putnam acknowledged civic engagement as a more representative public policy. The increase of the public in decision making leads to a more inclusive public policy decision making and thus facilitates a robust democracy. According to Putnam, (1995) “civic engagement is the people’s connection to the life of their community” (p. 2). Civic engagement is the active voice of the people in democratic governance. The term civic engagement has taken on many forms and explanations since the popularizing of the term by Putnam in the 1990s. It is a term employed in various spheres of public life to explain citizen input in decision making and the collective action by individuals to influence public policy. Berger (2009) suggested parsing out the main components of civic engagement to acquire a more detailed explanation of civic engagement and thus measurable results for an academic setting. He offered using the terms “political engagement,” “social engagement,” and “moral engagement” to capture the essence of what many researchers identify as civic engagement (Berger, 2009).

For the purposes of this study civic engagement has is studied from a perspective that denote an understanding of the activities one engages in one’s community, the range of which include voting, volunteering, activist campaigning on behalf of issues or political candidates, religious organizations, nonprofits, and informal networks all which play a role in the life of citizens. These activities provide a valuable link to building bonds in a community as well as building bridges to the wider society (Putnam, 2000). Additionally, of critical importance is the role of activism in the engagement activities by former offenders that involve activities such as participation in boycotting, town hall meetings, etc. that cannot always be captured in the same ways that we can measure by counting votes or those registered to vote.
Each researcher has to establish which sphere they choose to examine civic engagement through the lens of his or her study participants, based on their needs, agendas, and values. Rothstein (2005) offered that networks of offenders are close, dense and familial relations often are the supportive structures that undergird their relationships with the community. Putnam (2000) offered that it is this “bonding” capital that people may come to rely upon in the absence of “bridging capital” in the local community and wider society. For the purpose therein, the focus will be upon active engagement to mean the active participation in direct community involvement activities (Holman & Devane, 1999; Putnam, 2000). While de Tocquevile was complimentary of the American form of civil participation, joining groups and causes, Putnam (2000) referenced the sharp decline in civic participation in America throughout the last 30 years. Therefore, it is necessary to study civic engagement as it relates to former offenders given their reintroduction to their local community, the stigma of reintegration faced by many returning to communities and how offenders are incorporated into the wider community, and the personal context of the individuals involved in civic activities. Given the aforementioned contexts, one can begin to understand how former offenders are represented by the American polity. Civic engagement theory can address and highlight barriers to participation for marginalized groups and communities. Its proponents can find or create new areas for community involvement for groups excluded from electoral politics, including former offenders. The social capital theory documents the benefits of civic engagement that enlarge the associations relative to political participation, political representation, and human rights; between community involvement and local policy, access to services, education, and health outcomes; and between school involvement, child health outcomes, and
educational outcomes (Berry, 2005; Clemens, 1997; García, 2003; Hero, Garcia, Garcia, & Pachon, 2000; Marschall, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Sánchez-Jankowski, 2008; Skocpol, 1992; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999).

However, contemporary civic engagement theory does not discuss the marginalization and the ensuing lack of participation by former offenders in community life. The lack of trust in civic institutions can possibly account for this lack of engagement by offenders in American society. This study will address the unique challenges and barriers to participation experienced by many former offenders as they reintegrate into communities that sometimes view them with suspicion that may curtail their ability to engage in public life. Moreover, a major weakness in previous studies of civic engagement has been the very minor role of diverse groups to include ethnicity and race. This could be due in part to the fact that civic engagement, as defined by Putnam (1995, 2000, 2005), is summarized in an expression of majority; it is most easily understood and measured by the white majority citizenry (Hero, 2007).

While Putnam suggested that participation in community life begets trust, by stating, "The more we connect with other people, the more we trust them, and vice versa" (Putnam, 1995, p. 665), in contrast, Uslaner (2005) and others suggested that trust flows from the individual, by way of social networks, and then finally to civic institutions which ultimately leads to community cooperation and participation. It is this linkage that can explain the ability of individuals to connect with one another with generalized trust as an inherent factor in civic engagement, especially among marginalized groups. The next section will address this issue by addressing the challenges of creating trust in groups that are not a part of traditional networks.
Post Modern Views of Civic Engagement, Democratic Governance
and the New Public Service

Increasingly, many theorists Box (1998), King and Stivers (1998), and Hummel (2007) call for public administrators to not simply treat citizens as consumers, clients, constituents, voters, etc. but create new avenues for public discourse in the policy-making process. This new perspective lessens the role of positivism in the decision-making process and stresses the values of inclusion and participation as a means of framing and creating policies. Public discourse includes face-to-face interaction with citizens and fosters the ideal of democracy that facilitates negotiation and compromise reinforced by shared interests and a real need for both administrators and citizens to engage in problem identification and problem solving. Under the old paradigm of public administration, citizens were left out of the policy debate and consequently could only decide upon the policy decisions already discussed and decided upon by policy experts and public administrators. The challenge for modern day administrators is to balance the responsibility of administrators to efficiently deliver goods and services, but how also to best include citizens in the decision-making process. How can public administrators best serve citizens? In what ways can administrators engage citizens? What kinds of measurement metrics are appropriate to gauge the effectiveness of such efforts? Finally, can we identify the administration attitudes that can frustrate the process of honest and open discourse with citizens?

King and Stivers’ Democracy Is Us (1998) favored a return to earlier American life, whereby the role of the citizens and government emphasized 1) the local community whereby citizens can have a more meaningful impact on collective life; 2) small
responsive government instead of large, bureaucratic, and remote government; and 3) public service practitioners who help citizens achieve their collective goals as contrasted with the expert that controls public agencies.

Richard Box (1998) commented that the modern day public service practitioner works in an environment whereby they have to balance the public service ethos and the market economic forces of service delivery. In this era of cut-back management, privatization, and reinvention of government, the role of the practitioner is now concerned with the efficiency and economy of service delivery in which the citizen has become far removed. King and Stivers argued that we keep in mind who we serve? And for what purpose? To this end, they suggested that practitioners can engage in three models of public service delivery and engagement: 1) go the traditional route and offer services in a technical value neutral manner, 2) adopt the market-based economic delivery of services to a consumers' model, or 3) facilitate and create space whereby citizens can provide self-governance. Stivers, King, and Box suggested some ways in which public servants can help citizens self-govern which are: 1) to listen, 2) to conduct administration in a competent manner without the pretense of value free administration, and finally 3) seek ways in which to view their work in the eyes of citizens. Box argued that practitioners are “super citizens” who can help members of the community by adjusting organizational goals and policies to help meet the needs of citizens. Training is the key to how we train future public practitioners in how we engage citizens and return to the ethic of public service.

In *Strong Democracy* (1984), Benjamin Barber advocated a shift from the “weak” liberal version of democracy to a form he described in this way:
Strong democracy is a distinctively modern norm of participatory democracy. It rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogeneous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or good nature. (p. 117)

Kweit and Kweit (1980) hypothesized that civic participation will be most effective when the bureaucrats themselves consider participation an important component of their decision making since they possess the means to obstruct citizen participation. We shall speak of tolerance to denote a positive orientation to citizen participation. High tolerance should produce procedures for citizen participation which would be most likely to create responsible bureaucracy.

Waldo in his seminal work, The Administrative State (1948) spoke of the need of public servants to adhere to democratic principles in their administration of program objectives. He argued that the need to recruit honest people with professional integrity had to act as proper stewards of democratic principles within the democracy. He posited that public bureaucrats have both the duty and the responsibility to facilitate the “good life” for citizens in their administration. Waldo suggested that government must be effective and efficient but not at the expense of democratic principles. He argued that the professionalization of the public service and that “government is a tool to be used in the services of the individual” and believed that good government should be politically responsive to citizens and attacked the politics-administration dichotomy as one that was not feasible when seeking feedback from citizens about the effectiveness of the public bureaucracy. Waldo posited that few did rule the many and it is because of this duty that bureaucrats were entrusted to carry out the democratic principles of fairness and equity as well as inclusive treatment in government. He added that “autocracy during hours is the
price of democracy after hours.” He believed that the social, economic and political forces that acted upon the bureaucracy could not be ignored but provided with a response form government. Government should be run within the context of shared values that may run counter to the scientific management principles of efficiency. The argument that efficiency is value neutral belies the fact that policy-making decisions are made not in a vacuum but instead are a part of an evolving political landscape.

Simon (1976) wrote, “The principle of efficiency should be considered as a definition rather than a principle: it is a definition of what is meant by ‘good’ or ‘correct’ administrative behavior. It does not tell how accomplishments are to be maximized, but merely states that this maximization is the aim of administrative activity” (p. 39). Simon gave lip service to the hope that managers strive for efficiency, but he is actually promoting the idea that efficiency may not be the best way to get things done. It is merely a goal, an objective, not mandatory. It may be even better achieved if vigorous public participation guides management.

Goodsell’s work, “The Case for Bureaucracy” (2004) discussed the various challenges of public servants that work in an environment of competing interests of inadequate funding, increasing citizen expectations while simultaneously addressing financial insecurity, homelessness, and insufficient healthcare. Goodsell posited that public agencies and public servants should seek to engage citizens to breach the gap between the actual work that goes on inside the bureaucracy and the goods and services delivered. Goodsell noted that in various customer surveys the public viewed government in a negative light but when polled and asked about specific levels of customer satisfaction, the public gave favorable ratings to individual agencies. He advocated to
involve citizens for volunteer activities, to place them on advisory boards to increase buy-in and thus garner a more positive reaction to the bureaucracy.

Democratic governance and citizen engagement are two principles that are enduring concepts in the New Public Service. Janet and Robert Denhardt referred to the rational, efficiency paradigm of hierarchical organization in which public administrators and citizens exercised a limited role in policy making as the Old Public Administration (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2007). Conversely, many observers to include Alexis de Tocqueville (1890, 1945) commented on the number and quality of American civic associations in America at the turn of the 19th century. De Tocqueville was struck by the participation of citizens in everyday civic life that allowed citizens to collaborate with people of shared interests.

Social capital cannot flourish in an environment of mistrust and noncooperation. This communal approach has produced collective action that influences civic and political life. The old rational model of public administration viewed civic engagement as on the periphery of policy formulation with the public administrator serving as the bureaucratic gatekeeper for implementation.

The Old Public Administration embraces a paradigm of efficiency and effectiveness with a top down command and control structure with the administrator steering and not serving citizens in an environment of democratic administration. In fact, it was not until Waldo proposed that the very concept of democratic governance in an era of rational decision making and scientific method left “both public and private administrators false to the ideal of democracy . . . by reason of their insistence that democracy, however good and desirable, is nevertheless something peripheral to
administration” (Waldo, 1952, p. 7). The first half of the century stressed the need for administrators to employ neutral competence in the achievement of organizational goals. It was not until mid-century that we began the conversation about the role of administrators in providing democratic governance and the good life to citizens. It sees the role of government as brokering interests among citizens and other groups so as to create shared values. This might mean, for example, building coalitions of public, private, and nonprofit agencies to meet mutually agreed upon needs. The approach to accountability reflected in this approach suggests that public servants must attend to law, community values, political norms, professional standards, and citizen interests. The school of public administration theory and practice that we associate with this approach we have called the New Public Service (Denhardt and Denahardt, 2007). The principle of civic engagement highlights the importance of democratic governance. This sovereignty resides with the people and it is with this premise in mind that civic engagement underscores the decision-making and the allocation of shared resources. A community needs the social skills, knowledge, and values of all, including those returning to the community. It is within this context, the researcher explores the perceptions and attitudes of former offenders in relation to civic engagement.

**Research Questions**

Creswell (2007) advocates the use of an overarching central research question, which is broad in nature, and several sub-questions (Creswell, 2003, p. 106; 2007, p. 108). The central research question (Creswell, 2003, p. 105; 2007, p. 108) this study investigated is as follows: How do former offenders describe and experience civic
engagement? This exploratory question encompasses sub-questions (Creswell, 2003, p. 106; 2007, p. 108) of returning citizens’:

Q1. What are the thoughts and experiences of former offenders relative to social trust in civic institutions specifically, and the community in general?

Q2. If there is a disparity in trust, what are the policies and or attitudes that can help civic institutions re-build trust with the returning citizen?

Q3. What are perspectives and thoughts of former offenders concerning civic engagement and its importance to the community?

Q4. How can civic institutions help the returning citizen leverage their social networks?

Summary

This review of the literature has discussed the foundation of social capital in relation to forming and sustaining networks. Further these networks facilitate collective action that underpin civic engagement. However, the theoretical explanations of rational networks does not take into account the divergent processes and outcomes for marginalized populations including former offenders. Additionally, the literature review discusses civic engagement and democratic governance within the framework of the Old Public Administration. With its central focus of process and efficiency, versus the New Public Service which has encourages civic responsibility, explores the role of public administrators and practitioners in the process of civic engagement and decision-making.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methods and design used to address the primary research question of the study by exploring the perceptions and experiences of former offenders centered on civic engagement and social trust. The discussion of research methods and design includes an explanation of the sample selection and an account of participant selection procedures. The interview instrument is provided, along with data collection, processing, and analysis procedures. Methodological assumption, limitations, and delimitations are described. In addition, ethical assurances of study are outlined. The interview script and the informed consent procedure are included in the appendices.

Introduction

Although research on civic engagement and social trust have primarily focused on those traditional groups and networks in society (Putnam, 2003, 2007) insufficient research exists to determine the perceptions and attitudes of former offenders relative to civic engagement and social trust with community members and institutions. The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study is to develop a theory of civic engagement among former offenders, also known as returning citizens with civic institutions and social trust as they navigate life after incarceration. The following research questions
were developed to examine and describe the lived experiences of returning citizens centered upon the principal research questions.

Q1. What are the thoughts and experiences of former offenders relative to social trust in civic institutions specifically, and the community in general?

Q2. If there exists a disparity in trust, what are the policies and or attitudes that can help civic institutions re-build trust with the returning citizen?

Q3. What are perspectives and thoughts of former offenders concerning civic engagement and its importance to the community?

Q4. How can civic institutions help the returning citizen to leverage their social networks?

The goal of this study was to provide an in-depth analysis of the participants’ self-described civic engagement experiences, and clearly detail the factors they feel motivate or demotivate them. This study explored the research participants’ perspectives on social trust and capital, and opened the door to emergent civic engagement theories, to understand the participants’ perspectives as returning citizens and community members in general.

**Researcher’s Philosophy**

This research was approached from the perspective of an insider-outsider, the researcher has worked inside correctional facilities and has been involved with many organizations that deal with former offenders. As such, the researcher's background offers a unique vantage point into the lives of those who have been incarcerated, and some of the challenges they face as they reenter society. However, this study was meant to examine civic engagement through a lens of social networks and trust. Subsequently, the
researcher had to set aside some preconceptions about the participants' civic activities post release, and rely upon some foundational research and description of key concepts outlined in the study. To clarify, Anfara and Mertz (2006) argue in their work, Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research, that “it is impossible to observe and describe the way things really are, free of any prior conceptual scheme or theory… without some theory of what is relevant to observe, how what is to be observed is to be named, and so on” (p. 8). Any researcher, they argued, “no matter how unstructured or inductive, comes to fieldwork with some orienting ideas” (p. 17). Researchers often organize those orienting ideas in a conceptual framework to guide and clarify observations, collect data, and analyze results (Wolcott, 1995). Using this approach, conceptual frameworks should guide—but not dictate—the focus of the grounded theory inquiry and observations.

In addition to grounding this study’s design in the literature, this chapter explicates this researcher’s assumptions, paradigms, and beliefs as the instrument of the research, and attempts acknowledgement of how participation in the role of researcher influences the conduct of the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 15). The research design in a qualitative study originates with philosophical assumptions the researcher makes in the decision to carry out a qualitative enquiry. In addition, researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms, or sets of beliefs to the research endeavor, and these inform the manner and writing of a qualitative study. (Creswell, 2007, p. 15).

Five philosophical assumptions led researchers to select qualitative research methods: ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions (Creswell, 2007, p. 15). “The assumptions reflect a particular stance that researchers
make when they choose qualitative research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). This section briefly summarizes the philosophical assumptions of the researcher prior to the conduct of this research.

As a social constructivist (Creswell, 2007, pp. 20-21), the ontological view (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 5) of this researcher is one of subjective multiple realities suggesting that individuals involved in the phenomenon under study represent crucial sources of information. In this study, the participants’ words and perceptions add value to current research on civic engagement, social capital, and trust. Epistemology addresses the relationship between the researcher and the study (Creswell, 2007, pp. 16-18). In qualitative research, the investigator seeks to lessen the distance between themselves and the research by collaborating with participants and spending time in the field (Creswell, 2007, pp. 16-18). Consistent with qualitative research methods, the goal in this research study was to minimize the distance between the researcher and the research participants by acknowledging the researcher’s role in the study and by developing a trusting relationship with the participants, which provided a better understanding of what the participants were saying (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). Axiology is concerned with the role of values in research (Creswell, 2007, pp. 16-18). Although all researchers bring their values to a study, qualitative researchers make a concerted effort to reveal how their values shape the study, and the resultant analysis (Creswell, 2007, pp. 16-18). As further outlined in the reflexivity section below, the use of reflexivity facilitates disclosure of the role of this researcher’s values in shaping the study’s design and interpretation of the data throughout this study.
Qualitative researchers tend to adopt the rhetorical assumption that the writing style in qualitative research studies should be informal and personal (Creswell, 2007, pp. 16-18). In qualitative research studies, researchers rely upon the participants to give meaning to the data, so the writing often utilizes lingo that is meaningful to the research participants instead of textbook explanations which are of little relevance to the subject matter under investigation (Creswell, 2007, pp. 16-19). Utilizing the research participants’ own words and stories aids in the gathering of information determined by their varying perspectives and realities (Charmaz, 2006). The presentation of study findings in Chapter 4 include narratives that capture the participants’ meanings in their own words and ideas. “The procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). Qualitative methodological assumptions lead qualitative researchers to use inductive logic (Creswell, 2007, pp. 16-19). In addition, qualitative researchers must continuously evaluate the data to identify emerging themes and make changes to the research design, if indicated by the data. Accordingly, this study utilized qualitative research methods that were elastic enough to ensure adequate attention of the civic engagement experiences of the returning citizen, the population under examination in this study.

**Choice of Methods and Research Design**

The research question(s) should drive the methodological approach used to conduct the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12) and the research design. The main criterion for selecting the appropriate research method is one that best fits the research problem (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 24-25) and the research question (Seidman, 2006,
Qualitative research methods are suitable for research that seeks to understand a concept or a phenomenon in the lack of research that pertains to the subject of investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) or in instances in which the concepts pertaining to the given phenomenon are poorly understood or have not been fully developed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 25). As demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, there is a lack of understanding in relation to returning citizens involvement with civic engagement activities, and the factors that lead to community involvement. Given this lack of data and scholarly research on the experiences of former offenders with respect to possible social and political differences in engagement (Berry, 1997; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1997). Thus, this study’s use of a more flexible qualitative research design permitted exploration of new concepts and constructs (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 25) of the experiences of the returning citizen as they emerged, and thus aided further examination of this phenomenon. Qualitative research methods offer more flexibility than quantitative research methods because they are less rigid (Charmaz, 2006, p. 17) and they permit the researcher to follow leads as they emerge (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In addition, qualitative methods allow the researcher to capture the inner experiences of the research participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12; Seidman, 2006) and determine how the research participants form meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12); in this study, to discover how former offenders experience civic engagement and trust.

Grounded theory methods are among the most influential qualitative research methods when generating theory is the researcher’s primary work (Strauss & Corbin, 1997, p. vii). Grounded theory is useful when a theory to explain a process does not exist,
or when existing models or theories fail to address the population under study (Creswell, 2007, p. 66). Grounded theory is suitable for handling problems for which the researcher does not have a preconceived research hypothesis (Glaser, 1998, p. 11). Grounded theory research methods are also valuable in situations in which theories exist, but fail to address potentially important variables that are of interest to the researcher (Creswell, 2007, p. 66) because grounded theory research allows the researcher to gain an understanding of a phenomenon through the perception of those experiencing it (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Grounded theory research is well suited for research aimed at discovering the participants’ problems and generating a theory that addresses the problems (Glaser, 1998, p. 11). Accordingly, due to the limited research on the civic engagement activities of former offenders and their perceptions with respect to their networks and social trust which in tandem underpin civic engagement, this study employed grounded theory research methods (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967/1999/2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1997), using flexible guidelines for qualitative data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2).

Although the research design employed various grounded theory elements, classic approaches to grounded theory do not offer the flexibility that some qualitative researchers desire (Creswell, 2007, p. 68) and “there has historically been a problematic pretense that the researcher can be and/or should be invisible” (Clarke, 2005, p. 12). This study’s design relied primarily upon the constructivist grounded theory methods developed by Charmaz (1983, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006), because of the emphasis on interaction with the data and emerging ideas throughout the data collection.
and data analysis processes (2006, p. 179). Data were analyzed using a process of coding and comparing categories in order to discover patterns of behavior and strategies that people employed to address the most salient problematic phenomenon that occur in this substantive area (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This study was unique because it applied CGT to civic engagement among former offenders, and as such, differed from most studies on diverse groups that are confined to studying one particular group of participants.

**Setting**

This study had no particular setting. ACTION (Alliance for Congressional Transformation Influencing Our Neighborhoods), a referral agency for reentry services located in Youngstown, Ohio formally agreed to serve as a research site and the participants signed consent forms (see Appendix E). Open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted at a time and place of the interviewees choosing. The decision to restrict the sample to this agency is based upon the recommendation of others in the community that identified this agency as a non-profit that helped individuals with referral services. Although the agency is faith based, there is no indication that the participants' religious orientation or church attendance is a precondition for service provision or guidance. Additionally, this agency is open to the public, centrally located, and thus a prime resource for both locating and talking to participants who were formerly incarcerated. Subsequently, the sample ensured that each participant possessed the real life experience needed to speak with respect to the phenomenon under investigation.
Data Gathering Methods

The sample for this study was a convenience sample drawn from former offenders referred by a non-profit agency ACTION, which does not provide services, but instead acts as a resource center for former offenders in an urban community in Youngstown, Ohio. The community is an economically depressed, non-agricultural area with approximately 65,000 inhabitants whose racial makeup is 47% White, 45% African American, and 9.3% Hispanic (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Interviews were conducted until there was evidence of theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992, 1998; Speziale & Carpenter, 2003).

The researcher interviewed 10 individuals within a five-week period in the fall of 2014 and winter of 2015. These were open-ended, semi-structured questions which the interviewer asked the participants to explain and describe their experiences upon release from incarceration with civic engagement with community members. Additionally, the participants were asked to recount their experiences related to their social relations and trust in the community as a whole. The interviews were time intensive and interviews lasted from 60 minutes to 120 minutes. The data are presented on the collective responses of the participants. In terms of gender there were seven males and three females for a total of 10 in the study. Each had varying times of incarceration and release. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 63 years of age see Sample Characteristics (Appendix B). All the participants lived in the Youngstown area. The interviewees were the primary unit of analysis (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000) with their informed consent (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bailey, 1996, p. 11; Street, 1998. Bailey (1996), Holloway (1997), and Greig and Taylor (1999) called people key actors who volunteer assistance in
identifying possible participants for interview gatekeepers, which in this study was the Director for the nonprofit group ACTION (Alliance for Congregation Transformation Influencing Our Neighborhoods) in Youngstown, Ohio. In order to trace additional participants or informants, snowball sampling was employed. Snowball methodology was used to expand the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing (Babbie, 1995; Crabtree & Miller, 1992). Bailey (1996), Holloway (1997), and Greig and Taylor (1999) called those through whom entry is gained gatekeepers and those persons who volunteer assistance key actors or key insiders. While this approach is economical and efficient, a weakness of this approach restricts the availability to a small number of acquaintances (Gall & Borg, 2003). In essence, the researcher decided the direction of inquiry and which groups to include; this is a procedural issue under the researcher's purview as part of Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser (1998) wrote that the completeness of a sampling is based solely on "theoretical completeness" (p. 159). The sampling was completed when the researcher used "parsimony and scope" (p. 159) to produce a well-integrated substantive theory grounded in data that was evaluated conceptually and reached a level of theoretical saturation.

The intent in grounded theory research is to ground the theory in the data through representativeness of concepts in their varying forms (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 190), not to generalize per se (Charmaz, 2006, p. 101; Dey, 1999, p. 38; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 190). Therefore, the issue is not whether the researcher can generalize the research findings to a broader population (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). Instead, the researcher’s task is to develop an understanding of the research participants’ experiences
by searching for different sets of conditions affecting the phenomena and to incorporate that data into the emerging model or theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 101; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 190). Data collection was continued until the research questions were effectively answered and the topic(s) were exhausted or saturated, that is when the interviewees offered no new insights or perspectives on the topic. In this study, in-depth interviews served as the primary method for data collection. The basic underlying assumptions in interview studies are considerably different from those of experimental studies; therefore, researchers must approach participant selection in a different manner (Seidman, 2006, p. 51). Random sampling is not feasible in interview studies because randomness depends on a very large number of research participants and “true randomness would be prohibitive in an in-depth interview study” (Seidman, 2006, p. 51). In addition, individuals must consent to participate in the interviews, which introduces an element of self-selection and is, thus, incompatible with true randomness (Seidman, 2006, p. 51).

The goal in in-depth interview studies is for the researcher to conduct interviews in a manner that enables the research participants’ compelling stories about their experiences to replace the surface considerations of randomness and generalizability (Seidman, 2006, p. 51). This enables the researcher to make connections among the participants’ experiences and, by explicating the research participants’ stories in rich detail, provides readers with the ability to make connections to their own experiences (Seidman, 2006, p. 52).

The initial task for the researcher in a grounded theory research study is to obtain an overview of the overall process or phenomenon under study (Morse, 2010, p. 235). During this phase of the research study, the researcher seeks to determine the boundaries
and dimensions, as well as the path of the research study (Morse, 2010, p. 235). At this phase of the research, this researcher sought assistance from a non-profit organization to locate individuals (former offenders), who had experienced the phenomenon under study, and who were able to provide examples of the concepts of interest (Morse, 2020, p. 235; Seidman, 2006). Because data was abstracted in the CGT process, it became easier to see the patterns that lie within the material (Glaser, 2002, 2007). The flexibility of the methodology allowed for interviews with any individual who would make a contribution to the emergent theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Participants were chosen from those who "have been through, or observed, the experience under investigation (Morse, 2010, p. 231). Additionally, they were "reflective, willing, and able to speak articulately about the experience" (Morse, 2010, p. 231).

Themes that emerged from the collected data were used to derive meanings and perspectives based on the experiences of individuals with contact with civic organizations and their trust in said institutions. Findings from this study can inform professionals and practitioners on the challenges and barriers faced by those who are reintegrating back to the community.

**Data Collection, Processes, and Analysis**

Data analysis for the study employed a Glaserian approach in which data collection, analysis and memoing was ongoing and concurrent throughout the study (1978, 1998). Glaserian Grounded Theory (GGT) (1978) approach uses constant comparative methodology including: coding, memo writing, and sorting. Constant comparative methodology uses a collection of data with simultaneous analysis. Analysis of the data took place as soon as possible after transcription was completed. Upon data
analysis, a core variable was found which served as the foundation of theory generation. Core variables often appear frequently, link data, allow for variation from various population backgrounds, become more detailed, and have implications for formal theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992, 1998). The generation of categories and properties of the phenomenon being investigated provided a foundation for subsequent interviews until the data was saturated. This allowed the interview guide and questions to broaden, and modified the phenomenon as outlined in the following graphic illustration.

Figure 3.1. Phases of grounded theory study. From Constructing Grounded Theory, Kathy Charmaz (2007) Phases of Grounded Theory Study.

**Description of Coding Procedures - Substantive Coding**


**Open Coding**

Consistent with Glaserian grounded theory analysis; the data were coded at three levels. Each interview was digitally taped and transcribed. After the interviews were
transcribed, written notes and codes were written in the margins. During the first phase of analysis, the data was examined with line by line coding (Glaser, 1992, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). The information that guided the process represented information that was conceptually relevant to the study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992, 1998; Speziale & Carpenter, 2003).

Open coding is used in grounded theory to ascertain which direction the study will follow (Glaser, 1978). Codes reflected what the participant said and also what the researcher observed. The interviews were re-coded on three different occasions. After the initial interview was coded, the second interview was coded in a similar fashion and the data was examined for common ideas that were grouped. Further interviews were open coded and compared with ideas and relationships described in the researcher’s memos. As the categories unfolded, some categories were re-coded or combined with other categories. “Open coding both verifies and saturates individual codes,” (Glaser, 1978, p. 60) while memos “are theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding” (p. 83). Open coding was utilized until all codes were fully considered and developed. At the conclusion of the last interview, all codes were sorted to determine fit. Glaser (1978) cites that at this point of data analysis “In short a total saturation occurs: all data fit” (p. 60).

Selective Coding

Selective coding begins when the researcher “can see the prospects for a theory that . . . copes with the data entoto” (Glaser, 1978, p. 61). Once a core variable or category was identified, following Glaser’s recommendation, the coding then became selective. “The analyst delimits his coding to only those variables that relate to the core
variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 94). The researcher continued the interviews and coding until saturation of the core variable was achieved.

**Theoretical Coding**

Upon saturation, theoretical coding was used to further analyze the data.

“Theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 72). Theoretical codes integrate concepts as they are formed from constant comparative analysis (Christiansen, 2009).

**Memoing and Theoretical Sorting**

Theoretical memoing is considered by Glaser (1978) to be “key to formulating theory” (p. 116) and is “the core stage in the process of generating theory, the bedrock of theory generation, its true product is the writing of theoretical memos” (p. 83). If the researcher does not apply and use theoretical memoing, he or she is not engaged in grounded theory. Although data collection, analysis, and memoing are concurrent, memoing should take precedence. Memoing are written ideas about what is emerging from the data and analysis in real time. Memos capture ideas, and ideas are fragile and forgettable. Glaser describes memos "are private, which allows and fosters the autonomy and creativity to let emerge, unadvised, the GT generative analysis as the research goes on" (Glaser, 2013, p. 4). He recommends that memos should be written down immediately in order to capture the moment or thought (Glaser, 1978, 1998). Extensive memo taking was used in the study via manual notes. Theoretical sorting refers not to
data organization, but to conceptual sorting of memos into an outline of the emergent theory, which allows the relationships among concepts to be seen. Theoretical sorting often prompts additional memos and potentially additional data collection. This process allows for dense, rich conceptualization grounded in the data and not solely descriptions of data (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2001).

Throughout each step, themes began to emerge from the data. As the codes emerged and were categorized, themes and meanings materialized. From these themes and meanings, elements of a conceptual model emerged that describe the process of civic engagement for this sample of former offenders. A diagramed model was presented to create a visual illustration of the emerging theory. Subsequent to creating the diagram, a narrative was written to describe the elements of the emerging conceptual model. As the elements were refined, I continually returned to the original data and discussed the emergent findings with the participants.

The particular phenomena that was the focus of this study was social trust and civic engagement among individuals who are reintegrating or returning to their respective communities. More specifically, my research question was what do former offenders perceive to be the barriers to regaining and investment in social trust in their return to the community? However, Bentz and Shapiro (1998) and Kensit (2000) warned the researcher to allow the data to emerge. For this reason, the actual research questions (Appendix C) that were asked of the participants included:

1. What do you think of when you hear the word community?

2. Should people who have been in trouble with the law help out their communities? If so, why?
3. Is there anything that you have done to help out your community? Why or why not?

4. Have you currently sought out or received services from neighborhood associations and organizations designed to help offenders who have been recently released from a correctional institution? If yes, why? If not, why not? Please describe your interactions with these agencies.

5. Thinking of close friends - not your husband or wife or partner or family members - but people you feel fairly close to . . . Can you describe the nature of your relationship with them?

6. Describe some individual experiences you have had with others concerning your trust in others or others' trust in you as community member. Please be as specific and detailed as possible.

7. Reflect upon your experiences with trust in institutions and individuals and how you think/believe these experiences have affected your involvement in voluntary activities (e.g. joining organizations, volunteering, voting).

The research protocol included a demographic questionnaire, see (Appendix A)), and a list of semi-structured interview questions. Although demographic questions regarding age, gender, and education were asked and reported descriptively, these characteristics were not used as qualifiers for participation in the study. All interviews were manually transcribed using Windows Media Player and Microsoft Word. Transcribed interviews totaled 132 pages of data. A master copy of each transcript was kept locked in a secure location for safekeeping.
The questions were written based on a review of the literature and recognized gaps in the research. The audiotaped interviews were conducted face to face at the preferred location of the participants. Each interview was audiotaped with the permission of the participant. Each interview was assigned a code, for example, Participant-A, January 17, 2015. If more than one interview was conducted on the same day it was identified as Participant-B, January 17, 2015. Each interview was recorded in a separate folder on the audio tape, which was then labeled by its respective identifier. Each interview was conducted in a quiet space that was free from distractions and excessive noise.

**Verification**

To confirm internal validity, a “member check” was performed in which the researcher took back the themes and categories to the participants and asked if they were representational of the conclusions reached. In this technique, Merriam (1988) and Miles and Huberman (1984) asserted one possible method the researcher can test for the validity of the data (as cited in Creswell, 1994, p. 158). For example, a transcript of the findings was provided to the participants, and each was asked if they wanted to make corrections or additions. There were minor corrections to participant ages or marital status, but no further follow-up interviews were needed.

A file was opened for the various interviews, and following hard copy information was filed:

- The informed consent agreement;
- Notes made during the interview;
• Any notes made during the data analysis process, e.g., grouping of units of meaning into categories;
• The draft transcription and analysis of the interview which were presented to the participants for validation; and
• The confirmation of correctness and/or commentary by the participant about the transcript and analyses of the interview.

**Methodological Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

While some qualitative researchers have overlooked or dismissed questions of validity, reliability, and generalization in qualitative research as originating with quantitative or positivist notions, others have accepted the importance of these concepts in terms of trustworthiness, credibility, and dependability to evaluate qualitative research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Although qualitative research has been criticized as biased, small scaled and lacking rigor, when carried out properly it can be unbiased, in-depth, reliable, valid, and credible (Anderson, 2010). The terms reliability and validity are often applied to quantitative studies although the concepts are in qualitative research as well (Anderson, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

By achieving reliability and validity in qualitative data, the researcher permits an assessment of the consistency and credibility of the research as a whole (Anderson, 2010). Integrity is perhaps the most important criterion in qualitative research because it indicates that participants can recognize their own attributed meanings to the experiences being studied (Goldblatt et al., 2011). Validity in qualitative research refers to whether data are trustworthy and genuine, while reliability refers to whether data are stable, dependable, and can be reproduced (Anderson, 2010). Data saturation was used to
increase the validity of this study. Data saturation is the point at which no new information is reported (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). The use of ten participants enabled me to achieve a manageable weight between the intensive data collection and analysis process (Anderson, 2010; Giorgi 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and the possibility of learning new and significant information from additional participants (Seidman, 2006). Constant comparison was also be used to increase the validity of the proposed study (Anderson, 2010). Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, each interview was compared with previous interviews to ensure that data were treated as a whole, rather than in fragmented parts (Anderson, 2010). A constant reflective inquiry of data throughout the collection process permitted the identification of emerging or unanticipated themes (Anderson, 2010) and assisted in determining whether to include additional participants in the study to ensure saturation.

Assumptions

One assumption of this study was that participants provided authentic, open answers to interview questions. To lessen the occurrence that individuals would provide answers because of the presence of the researcher, (Moustakas, 1994), participants were advised that no descriptive account was preferable when describing their experiences during the interview. Participants were also given the opportunity to review the analysis of the data and to provide feedback on the interpretations of findings (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Willis, 2007). The sharing of qualitative research findings with participants is an important methodological and ethical procedure designed to enhance the credibility of the study (Goldblatt et al., 2011). Another significant assumption of the grounded theory approach is that the data did exist and would be revealed throughout the
process of conducting the interview, which was (Covan, 2011). As the interviews proceeded, the process of theoretical sampling dictated whom to interview next, and the connections between these interviews became apparent between conceptual ideas. An assumption of grounded theory research is that the researcher is perceptive and used good judgment to select individuals for interview (Morse, 2010). Comparing this data to currently existing concepts enhanced the current groupings of concepts and presented new categories to be explored. Emphasis remained on the concepts and properties derived from the data, rather than on the specifics or descriptions that a researcher utilizing another methodology (Glaser, 1992, 1998).

Reliability refers to the trustworthiness and consistency of research findings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), such as whether participants will change their answers during an interview, or whether they would give different responses to different interviewers. Reliability in qualitative research can be enhanced by increasing the reliability of the researcher, who is the primary instrument in interviewing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In order to enhance reliability in this study, non-leading questioning was employed, which might have inadvertently influenced the responses of participants. Reliability was also achieved through the use of a researcher notebook and a detailed audit trail providing information about where the data came from, how it was collected, and how it was used (Willis, 2007). Details of the methodology is noted, so that others can evaluate the data collection and analysis procedures. By providing a clear and continuous path between the collection of data and its use within the study, informed assessments of the findings and conclusions are made possible (Willis, 2007).
There are several strengths associated with using a grounded theory design. This design allows a problem, issue, or phenomenon to be explored in depth and detail (Anderson, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). The intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to either generate or discover a theory. A key notion is that a pre-determined theory is not used, rather is generated or "grounded" in the data from individuals who have experienced the process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory interviews are semi-structured and not restricted to specific questions, allowing the researcher to guide or redirect the interview (Anderson, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). The method and design of this study permitted me to make revisions or alter the questions as new information was presented by the interview process. A smaller data set was utilized as compared to a quantitative design; however, the perceptions and experiences of individuals can be more robust and convincing than quantitative data and aid the process in (Anderson, 2010). Grounded theory involves an emergent and evolving design, rather than a tightly prefigured design. Although the small sample size in this study did not permit the generalization of findings to larger populations, findings from this study may be transferable to other similar settings on a case-by-case basis (Polit & Beck, 2010). Thick, rich descriptions have been provided about the research setting, study participants, and observed interactions and processes to permit others to determine whether findings can be applied to different settings or groups of people (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Limitations of the Methodology

In this section the design limitations are discussed. Every reasonable effort was made to assure objectivity and representation of the study. A limitation in this study lay
in the fact that qualitative studies are at risk of misrepresenting certain aspects of reality because of the narrative responses of the participants; in other words, their lived experiences and the reality are more likely to run a risk of misrepresentation because of the differing perspectives of both the research and the participants. Representations of reality and the representation of reality as perceived by the researcher is another limitation (Sandelowski, 2006). Additionally, it is possible that different researchers will achieve different findings with another group of participants (Creswell, 2007). Selection bias is an issue because of self-selection by the participants to join the study. Grounded theory is designed to "allow, with discipline, for some of the vagueness and flexibility which aid the creative generation of theory" (Glaser, 1965, p. 438). The study need not be reproduced to be valid; its validity lies in testing the hypotheses to see if they fit and help explain a problem area conceptually (Glaser, 1978, 1998, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Furthermore, another limitation of the Classic Grounded theory Approach is not to test a theory, but rather to develop or uncover one. The study was delimited by strict data collection and analysis procedures that reduced the numerous participant perspectives to the core variable by systematically abandoned those which did not account for the problem echoed by the majority of participants in the study (Glaser, 1978, 1998). Additionally, akin to all qualitative research, this study was shaped by how the researcher, understood, synthesized and presented participants’ descriptions of their experiences.

The findings cannot be generalized to the large population of all former offenders in the United States. However, generalizability was not the goal of this grounded theory study. Instead, the goal was to examine the perceptions and experiences of participants to
develop elements of an emergent conceptual model for understanding how civic engagement is experienced by former offenders, and how the formation of networks and trust can affect civic attitudes and actions. The findings generated from the study could be tested with other groups of former offenders to determine their transferability and relevance.

**Delimitations**

Another limitation present in the study was that the sample group is not representative of all ex-offenders; the perspectives and narrated experiences of the interviews were influenced by the convenience sampling done in the context of individuals who may be known to each other. Creswell (1994) added the researcher's presence may bias the responses. Additionally, not all people are articulate or perceptive. Moreover, the researcher is limited in her ability to ask a range of questions that may speak to the unique circumstances of the participants. Thus, research is always influenced by the researcher’s partiality, especially in method and methodology in interpretive studies. In this study, completion of an exhaustive research of the literature was crucial; thus, the researcher attempted not to miss clues or contradictions, or emerging themes. The researcher must remain conscious of undeveloped findings. As a result, alternative explanations or suggestions for data collection and analysis were solicited from colleagues and literature reviews. The categories relevant to the core variable were deepened and became increasingly consistent as the researcher determined where and in which setting data collection should proceed (Holton, 2010; Stillman, 2007). The goal of the study was to produce a small set of high-level concepts (Glaser & Holton, 2004) that would enable the researcher to look at all facets of one
problem conceptually. "A GT need not describe the whole unit, just a core process within it" (Glaser, 2002, p. 9).

**Ethical Assurances**

In order to ensure that participants understood the parameters of the study and any ethical consideration, an informed consent process was followed (Holloway, 1997; Kvale, 1996). Bailey (1996) cautioned that deception may be counter-productive. In order to gain informed consent from the participants an informed consent documented was created and given to participants for signature prior to their interviews (Appendix E) that addressed:

- They are participating in research;
- The purpose of the research;
- The procedures of the research;
- The risk and benefits of the research;
- The voluntary nature of research participation;
- The participant’s right to stop the research at any time; and
- The procedures used to protect confidentiality. (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; Kvale, 1996, Street, 1998)

Informed consent was explained to each participant at the beginning of the interviews. The interviewees were asked to sign the agreement before the start of the interview and were instructed that their responses would be audiotaped but that their individual names would not be used in the transcription or write-up of their completed interviews. Participants were assured their names and those of the agencies for whom they work or received services would not be used in the reported findings and that no data
published or distributed would aid in the identification of specific participants. Additionally, individuals were assured that their privacy and confidentiality would be protected to the extent permissible by law. Finally, the subjects were advised of confidentiality and to whom they could refer questions or concerns about the study.

Summary

This chapter describes the rationale and methods to be employed in this study. The researcher’s procedure for obtaining participants, inclusion criteria and trustworthiness were discussed. Precautions and safeguards to protect this vulnerable population were outlined to ensure appropriate institutional review board approval. Data sources and Glaserian grounded theory methods of data collection and analysis were used in the study. Lofland (1994) indicated that design methodologies comprised of data collection and analysis are similar among qualitative methods; the manner in which the findings are reported vary.

This study investigated the persistent problem of reintegration within the context of civic engagement and social trust, and developed a theory that explains how individuals who face barriers to reintegration after incarceration, and specifically how mistrust of institutional policies face barriers to smooth progression in their transition into society. Data pointed to many areas of social and civic life that indicated social exclusion and fractured social networks in the study group, both were challenges to civic engagement. Theory emergent from personal accounts of individuals' experiences post release can provide greater understanding of the problem of disengagement among these participants. Putnam (2001) noted that research is needed to provide more information about the constructs that affect civic engagement among marginalized groups. A CGT
study analyzes patterns of behavior and reaches a conceptual level, transcending behavioral details and description (Glaser, 1978). Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted that theory helps in the areas of prediction and explanation of behavior. A paradox of distrust presents a conceptual overview that helps explain participants' behavior and may enlighten the public concerning causal factors in the decision of former offenders to engage in civic activities and social life. A great deal of research has already been conducted in the areas of civic engagement, social capital, bridging and bonding networks, and social trust. Most studies, however, were quantitative in nature, and limited in "depth and breadth as far as individual experiences and perceptions were concerned" Alesina and La Ferrara (2000); Goldin and Katz (1999). Rothstein (2005) and Arneil (2006) appreciate the need for a more holistic interpretation of civic engagement by disparate groups, because each study looked at only a limited number of outcomes in an area that is quite complicated to study. The strict methodology of CGT fostered the contribution of a unique theory of civic engagement among former offenders and the learning that a quantification of variables or testing of a known hypothesis could not. Grounded theory allowed logical, yet creative progress through an iterative process that produced a conceptually rich, rather than descriptive theory of a problem area that is of social concern. Insights directly from individuals revealed patterns of participant behavior to work through and around problems (Glaser, 1998) in both reintegration and the attainment of resources. Theories emergent from CGT methodology are perfectly suited for issues we need to understand and know very little about (Gatin, 2009; Glaser, 1998). A well-envisioned grounded theory study usually is able to go beyond prior work and integrate the new theory within its scope (Glaser, 1978). The generality of a theory
developed during CGT research also allows for refinement of the theory itself in response
to developments in the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Such theories can help guide
practitioners and policy makers as they seek to engage former offenders after their
incarceration, and their eventual return to civic life.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Grounded theory explores the main concerns of the population of interest and investigates the process or patterns that this population uses in response to a concern (Artinian, Giske, & Cone, 2009; Charmaz, 2010; Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992, 1998, 2008, 2011. This method inductively generates theory from descriptions from the participants themselves. It is the purpose of grounded theory research to reveal the hidden processes that are occurring in response to the central concern of the population of interest (Glaser, 1992, 1998, 2008, 2011). This allows theory to emerge unforced from the data. Discovering the principal concern of the participants is a central property of classic grounded theory methodology (Glaser, 1992, 1998, 2008, 2011). Although classic Glaserian method discourages the use of interview guides, interview guides are often used to begin the research with a problem question in mind to bound the study. Although this variant of the method is less open, it does allow the range of the study to be defined and guide the researcher. Additionally, the main concerns of the participants are discovered over the course of data analysis and the research question may or not be answered. The researcher in this study chose to use the following research questions:
1. What do you think of when you hear the word community?

2. Should people who have been in trouble with the law help out their communities? If so, why?

3. Is there anything that you have done to help out your community? Why or why not?

4. Have you currently sought out or received services from neighborhood associations and organizations designed to help offenders who have been recently released from a correctional institution? If yes, why? If not, why not?
   Please describe your interactions with these agencies.

5. Thinking of close friends - not your husband or wife or partner or family members - but people you feel fairly close to . . . Can you describe the nature of your relationship with them?

6. Describe some individual experiences you have had with others concerning your trust in others or others' trust in you as community member. Please be as specific and detailed as possible.

7. Reflect upon your experiences with trust in institutions and individuals and how you think/believe these experiences have affected your involvement in voluntary activities (e.g., joining organizations, volunteering, voting).

Core Categories and Basic Social Processes

Core categories are main themes that represent the processes that the participants use to resolve their main concern (Glaser, 1998). Core categories had the following criteria: 1. Must be central and relate to the most other properties and categories, 2. Reoccurs frequently in the data, 3. Takes greater time to saturate due to the fact is related
to many other categories, 4. Relates easily and has meaningful connections to other categories, 5. Has “clear and grabbing implications for formal theory”, 6. Has “carrythrough” or doesn’t lead to dead ends in the theory, 7. Has variability, 8. While accounting for variation also is part of the problem, and 9. Can be any type of theoretical code: process, condition, two dimensions or consequence (Glaser, 1978, p. 95-97).

All basic social processes are core variables, but not all core variables are basic social processes (Glaser, 1978). In addition to the above discussed criteria, in order for a core variable to be classified as a basic social process in addition to the above discussed criteria, the core variable also must comprise two or more emergent stages that “differentiate and account for variations in the problematic pattern of behavior” and be temporally variable (Glaser, 1978, p. 97). The basic social process describing how former offenders experience civic engagement was a process of disengagement from civic and political activities, that affected both their interactions with civic organizations and the community as a whole. In this study, the basic social process describing how the individuals' prior incarcerations had effect upon their sense of community and civic participation post release. Participants were attempting to navigate their reintegration with society bound by their interactions with their social networks and advocacy groups. One person described the process and feelings associated with life after incarceration by commenting, "A lot of my friends who have gone to prison and have come back, I've seen the struggles that they face coming back into the community and coming back into society and trying to get back on their feet finding housing, finding jobs, possibly getting an education and just finding those ways of turning their life around and that block is constantly in their way. Their past is always used against them to stop them from being
able to move forward and to do better with their lives”. This statement reveals the main concern people who are returning to society, negotiating the perceptions of others, and navigating the social processes of reintegration to maintain their quality of life in housing, finances, employment, and health/mental concerns. Even as these institutions and relationships, in part exist to help former offenders reintegrate, these same processes and relationships acted as barriers to trust because of the perceived challenges they presented. Evidence of a potential core category emerged through coding data in subsequent interviews. With constant comparison, control was also evident in the initial interviews. Confirmation of the core category occurred through analyzing data from the seventh, eighth and ninth interviews. As theoretical sampling occurred with constant comparison with other interviews in which an emergent theory was uncovered. The participants described the lack of assistance from the same networks and organizations they relied upon for their reintegration, but instead these institutions served to hinder community engagement, One participant stated: …the need is so great because if you don't have supports of family and if you don't or if you can't get into one of their institutions or whatever …transitional housing. You're just out here and it's a psychological stress where you know that you gotta make ends meet and there's no support.

An emergent theory took into account the variables of mistrust, but also explained the patterns that the participants described that they went through when there was a concern that they could not control, for example, the inability to acquire education or employment based upon statutory limitations based upon their felony convictions.
Key Themes

To present findings that amply express the results of the study, thick description (Creswell, 1994, p. 160) and direct quotations have been presented. Direct quotations provide the foundation of qualitative and grounded theory reporting (Anderson, 2010; Moustakas, 1994) and increase the fidelity of the analysis and interpretations (Goldblatt et al., 2011). The research has in some cases used the direct quotations of participants that are most illustrative of the research findings have been selected (Anderson, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). Each respondent was evaluated based on the meaning they attribute to civic engagement and the effects this has on their social trust both in individuals and civic institutions. Various narratives were assessed to generalize about the meaning these events have for the respondents. Furthermore, to understand the meaning that individuals place on civic engagement, interviews “allow felons to articulate their views within their own frames rather than those provided by survey questions” (Manza and Uggen 2006:137). Following these same assumptions, this research employed in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of the returning citizen with regards to the factors that both impede and promote social trust and civic engagement. The findings from this study can inform researchers and practitioners regarding their ability to engage these returning citizens and explain the factors that lead to civic disengagement.

Theme 1: Stigmatization

Several participants remarked they perceived civic organizations and institutions as unable to speak to their individual needs because of a lack of connection between the community and the returning citizen. When asked the question, have you currently sought out or received services from neighborhood associations and organizations designed to
help offenders who have been recently released from a correctional institution? If yes, why? If not, why not?

One participant stated:

You have to be engaged with the individual for the individual to be engaged with you and the program. You have to be connected in that cohesive connection, it's not there with reentry programs and ex-offenders (53 year old unemployed male).

Another participant remarked,

So, when a returning citizen comes home, they can get no job, they can get nowhere to stay, they’re going back to the same households they was in, obviously something wasn’t right. You going back to that same environment, you don’t have no other picture or example of anything else… you gonna reoffend (48 year old volunteer).

The following comments are direct quotations from several participants that are based upon their interactions with individuals within civic organizations.

I believe honesty is the best policy. Because you get your point across to them, they understand, and they’d rather fulfill your needs than send you away. Cause if you go in there and try to con em’, they’re gonna send you away. You're not gonna get nothing and you can’t play that game anymore. I was brought up in a lot of the negative on the Southside of Youngstown from pimps, conmen to gamblers all of it. So yes I can go that route but I said honesty is the best policy versus the negativity. I'm not going to try to put myself back into prison, back into the jailhouse or in front of a judge; keep it on the straight and narrow. And you know what the blessings are coming and I'm having a great time (53 year old laborer).

The thought process should be that this person is valuable. This person is an asset to the community. If you want me to pay taxes (and you know that's all the government wants) then how am I going to pay taxes if I don't get a job, I don't get it. You want me to be a participant in the community. You want me to participate in the community but if I don't have ownership in the community, I can't participate. I won't participate (60 year old, unemployed).

Every time my name comes up they still talk about that (prior felony conviction). I mean and we’re in 2015. I’ve been out for 15 years. The activities that we’re complained of, I was indicted five years after the fact so it was 1993. So we're twenty two years later and you know. . . . I had bi polar manic depression that was untreated, a little bit of drug and alcohol use. They don't care about any of that. They just think I'm a bad guy and they're not gonna give me a break, so that's a barrier that I face all the time (63 year old Director, Non-Profit).
Participant continued,

I know ex-offenders come out and trust is an issue. That’s probably the one thing, they don’t think that people appreciate them, they don’t think they’re going to get a chance. Then what ends up happening is that’s the excuse. “Oh well, I didn’t get a job because I’m an ex-offender, or I can’t get a job because I have a record”.

When I didn’t get the office job that I deserved because I had a degree that said I could do it, basically. I said to myself “This is crazy”, because I did my time. You see back then, it's been 21 years. So I done said over and over and over again, “I did my time, I did my time, I did my time” but now I understand that regardless to me doing my time, it’s just the way the society has it set up (48 year old community activist).

I told him (the landlord) straightforward, I said “look I have to go register” and he said “well I can't rent to you” I said “do you have any rental properties that you will rent to me or know of anybody?” and it was like he didn't want to give me any kind of answer, a response or anything. My mom forked out a couple thousand dollars for me to stay in a motel for a while and it put her in debt. I'm still paying on that (he laughs) (53 year old laborer).

Even though my crimes are misdemeanors, there are still jobs I will never be able to have because of the misdemeanor crimes that I have. There were a lot of theft charges so therefore I will never be able to work around or for agencies or businesses that have money (53 year old volunteer).

Participant continues,

I just don't think it's fair because you’re continually punishing a person for a past transaction or transgression that they've paid the price for already. They've served their time, they've made their restitutions, the courts have said case closed, whatever. But community fails to see that and that even goes for employment opportunities. I have a lot of friends that have gone to college and I have a bachelor’s degree in social work. A lot of my classmates went to go take their boards and they found out the state wasn’t going to issue them a license because of something they did when they were 19 years of age, they’re in their 30s.

I done paid my debts to society. I done did what I had to do. I made a mistake, it's behind me now. I'm a get out and I'm gonna do what I have to do but society says otherwise.

When asked the question, how do you and people you know reconnect with the community? One participant stated,
PE: A lot of us don't; were stigmatized. I still am stigmatized with my own family, they still think of me as that person from 11 years ago that did horrible things and stuff like that. There's a lot of people in the community that still look down on people who have done or made bad decisions whether it's committing crimes or having substance abuse issues. They tend to constantly remind them of what they view them as and not who they are trying to become today (53 year old volunteer).

Another commented,

People need to be trusted and that's kind of what we're trying to do here at this at this (states agency). It's for other people besides ex-offenders but we treat ex-offenders just like anybody else. I lot of people do have keys to the place. It's a beautiful place there’s a lot of nice things here until I get burned, I'm going to trust people to respect it, take care of it and I think that that's one of the things that you have to do is you have to show them that you trust the them (63 year old, Director Non-Profit).

And still another stated,

I believe honesty is the best policy. Because you get your point across to them, they understand, and they’d rather fulfill your needs than send you away. Cause if you go in there and try to con em', they’re gonna send you away. You're not gonna get nothing and you can’t play that game anymore. I was brought up in a lot of the negative on the southside of Youngstown from pimps, conmen to gamblers all of it..... keep it on the straight and narrow (53 year old laborer).

People start to trust you when you don't have any agenda I'm out there to do what I want to do and I'm also very open about it, I don't kid anybody I can say by the way I'm an ex-felon. I'm right up front with people and they appreciate that so I'm very honest with the people (60 year old grandmother).

Theme 2: Advocacy

Many participants commented on their various experiences with respect to civic engagement in their community. The questions centered on civic engagement involved participants' perceptions relative to their perceptions of what constitutes the term community and the importance of giving back after release. Several participants stated that they thought it was important to give back primarily to address some of the perceived inequities within the returning citizen population. When asked the question, is there
anything that you have done to help out your community? Why or why not? One participant stated,

*I mean I think that for me in particular and I can speak only really of myself, but it’s really a cathartic effect for me. I mean I am motivated probably most of all because the realization that I screwed up and that I have an ongoing and continuing debt to society that I try to meet every day. I mean I want people to like me. I want people to think boy that (states name) he’s a good guy. He came back with all the adversity that he had, he made a contribution, he’s a good person* (63 year old Director, Non-Profit).

*We raise awareness and we educate the community so in my mind anytime there's this engagement of people around improving their common word “community”. I see that as civic engagement. When we talk about it in the organizational way, it's the voting process you know getting people to register to vote or making them aware of different candidates and platforms things of that nature* (38 year old community activist).

The participant additionally stated,

*But it doesn’t fall into the bracket organizationally as civic engagement but anytime we're getting out there talking to the community educating the community about anything that involves the success of community that's just what I . . . that's how I view it in my heart.*

Another participant stated,

*But civic engagement can kinda be a preparation for regaining the trust of other individuals and institutions to further success in life and employment and everything else. I mean, that’s one of the ways that I look at it. I mean that's partially true in my case but mine is more for validation, to restore my image and because I like to do it. This is what I’m good at, I mean I’m an Irish politician you know I mean, I gotta lot of bullshit, might as well do it for the right reasons and people respond and it’s effective and they love you for it and that's what keeps me going* (63 year old Director, Non-profit).

Several participants commented they felt it was important to get involved and give back because of the void in support and services for returning citizens. One participant stated: The question asked, should people who have been in trouble with the law help out their communities? If so, why? One participant commented,
Why do I want to give back and get involved and open up is because a lot of information that I had received ...thinking that you were going to get help in the community, those organizations didn't exist, didn't apply and you hit a wall. You say “Wow, what is...” and you call certain people and stuff and they say “no”. And then some of the ones that you do call, the process is so long and it's so hard and it's so tedious , they put you off for months and months and “I need help now” I mean, I hate to sound like..... but I'm in need and they're saying “ Well, we'll schedule you three or four months down the line and you're saying I'm here and so that's got me thinking s... something's got to be done better than that because you have to apply you have to solve for where it's needed at that time (53 year old student).

Another stated,

The whole concept of it is to build a network of people who really understand community. Now think about it, Marines have a community and communal understanding, a common communal understanding. Returning citizens that have had that experience, that have that heightened level of everything: they understand community the way I understand community. Now if I can begin to link and grow this in my city, in my state in my nation and in this world then I feel like... we can affect a lot of positive change (38 year old service provider).

Several participants expressed their reasons or offered their perceptions for nonparticipation in civic activities. One participant commented:

I can't get people to participate in civic engagement and I tell people all the time the hardest part for me with the civic engagement is the fact that you can't get a hungry person to do nothing. A hungry person will be sitting here looking at you and their stomachs growling and there like “Dog, I wish I had a burger. I'm so hungry, I gotta feed my kids tonight”. “You know what I mean? They're itching in their seat barely wanting to fill out this whole job application because they got to go get their hustle on to go feed their kids. So society needs to figure out a way to help people reenter into society" (60 year old grandmother).

Another participant added:

Because I understand the inner workings of a prison system and the settings around there and I understand what another other individual is going through. Hopefully with my insight and my knowledge, I can get them into the right correction.
**Theme 3: Fractured Networks**

Uggen, Manza, and Behrens (2004) explain that no other group has been stigmatized more than felons: Further stating, “Felons often experience stigmatization across all three reintegrative domains [socioeconomic, familial, and civic] simultaneously. The pervasive generalized ‘felon’ label that defines the relationship between ex-felons and society complicates problems of adjustment upon re-entry” (p. 280). When asked the question, what were the actions you undertook to rebuild trust with community members, one participant stated,

*I let my work speak for me. If I work for you and you see what I'm doing, I'm doing a good job, I'm not damaging your property, I'm not stealing from you, I'm not doing anything wrong, you kinda start thinking “well he's a good person to have around, come around when I need help with something then the trust starts in. So I let them work on that. I tell them “whatever you need plain and simple, call me, I'll be there for you.”* (53 year old laborer).

*I did a lot of volunteer work, I did A LOT of volunteer work. I don't care who it was anybody ask me to go speak here, speak there about my experience or whatever I was there. My probation department the people that I was on probation with or supervised (I forget what it's called) supervision. One of the supervisors not my actual but their supervisor asked me . . . he was teaching some criminal justice majors and he asked us to speak to them. I said “Of course.” They asked me to go back in to the prison. I went back into Elkton with them twice to talk. It was anything, anything they wanted me to* (38 year old community activist).

Participant continued,

*There is this concept in my mind of community and with that is accountability, so we hold each other accountable for our actions. We support each other; sometimes it comes down to even financially supporting each other. It definitely comes down to security, supporting each other. But most importantly it was our spiritual studies and development that we linked ourselves as a community in.*

*When others see you doing good, they’re going to say “wait a minute, that's not a bad person” Maybe I can help him out and someone down the road, they’re going to help you out well and it's a proven fact* (53 year old laborer).
And I wanted to change others’ lives. So I came here I'm here because of the connections that I have from the church and those relationships with my mother and all of those people and the people who knew me and know me and things like that (48 year old student).

For instance, I know that it will be very practical for me in direct terms for me to engage myself through voluntary activities. There are secondary benefits that come with that that aren’t a direct . . . there’s that direct benefit and gratification of helping others but then people see what you do whether it’s good or bad. People see what you do so from a practical standpoint being engaged being involved, being active has his own benefit especially if you’re doing something positive. Because it will be observed by others, it will be discussed between others and there will be an aggregate benefit that might not be immediately perceptible but it’s there nonetheless (53 year old unemployed male).

When people come back into society they need connections, they need things and so this is what matters the most because that is still there, you still going to have to handle that, you’re still gonna have to face that and the community has to learn how to tilt the ground and say hey, even though we have some things that we have to do but we’re going to have to blend and put it together because they’re coming they’re coming out and so if you bridge that gap then the ones that come out can give something to the community and make it breathe and be a part of that as well (48 year old student).

Most of the people that I’m close with. The relationship is bound up with social justice activities. I mean we’re community activist. So rather it be through the church or through this place here or other areas. Remember this job and the church, it’s not a 9 to 5 job. You know, I’m here late at night. I go out to dinner with these people. I have them for social, semi social activities. So there’s a lot of blurring of the boundaries there so most of my friends are involved with this some way or another. So there more than just co-workers, the people that I know and trust (63 year old Director, Non-Profit).

Several participants commented about the role their families in their reintegration and the challenge they faced rebuilding their relationships.

She (Mother) was happy I was returning home. She met me at the bus stop, she only lives right downtown so it's only two blocks over. We walked over to her place and she said “you can stay for two weeks after that you gotta leave, you gotta find a place” I said “I understand ma but they only thing is I gotta come up with the money” I tried to get a hold of my dad, my dad wouldn't give me anything (48 year old laborer).
So when I think about coming home, she (mother) was helpful financially but it would pain her to hear me say that I wanted hugs, affection, and stuff like that. I did 10 years, I was sentenced to 14 but I did 10 years with no human . . . you know . . . man thing you know . . . whatever we do but (38 year old service provider).

Somebody can help you but they can have a motive and my grandmother’s only motive was to see me succeed so that was genuine. So when a returning citizen comes home, they can get no job, they can get nowhere to stay, they’re going back to the same households they was in, obviously something wasn’t right. You going back to that same environment, you don’t have no other picture or example of anything else . . . you gonna reoffend (53 year old community activist).

If you’re one that’s into religion or the community in your church. You’re building relationships at college with friends and faculty members. You’re building relationships up, you are bonding back up with friends that you knew. Also, your building relationships back within your family members (53 year old student).

Society has a responsibility to help previously incarcerated individual reintegrate into society not the responsibility to that individual to help them reintegrate but the responsibility to themselves to help them that person reintegrate. That’s where both the ethical and practical considerations come in, it just makes sense (38 year service provider).

Participant Continued,

So all I’m saying is, I don't have the time to use . . . I don't have the time to play games. I don't have the time to . . . so when it comes to relationships, friends like that. I pick according to who is more beneficial to us getting to the goal of helping the people.

Theme 4: Mistrust

Several participants commented about the ineffective service delivery they received from various organizations that hindered their reintegration efforts due to procedural, budgeting or statutory sanctions. Former Governor Charlie Christ commented, once somebody has truly paid their debt to society, we should recognize it. We should welcome them back into society and give them that second chance. Who doesn't deserve a second chance? (as cited in King, 2008). When asked the question, have you currently sought out or received services from neighborhood associations and
organizations designed to help offenders who have been recently released from a correctional institution? If yes, why? If not, why not? One participant commented,

_Sometimes people have talked about when they return back to the community . . . someone will say “Such and such place, go over there they have reentry services “but there's nothing there and they get frustrated and deflated.”_ (53 year old student).

Participant Continued,

_They didn't want to respond to my paperwork in time. They delayed things just like they did in prison. And I was like “do I have to fight through this again?”_ 

_I returned home in January of ’14. Everything was hard. I tried to get scripts filled for my meds; couldn't do it. I had no money. Welfare refused to give me cash, they said we’ll only give you food stamps and that was $187, it really didn't give me far. I tried to get jobs; people would not hire me because of the incarceration. I tried to get a place to live landlords said no because of my incarceration. I couldn’t stay at the Rescue Mission because of my incarceration. So it was hard, I was on the street. I was living daily on the street and going to my mom’s to shower and to be able to eat_ (48 year old laborer).

_Well, we’ll schedule you three or four months down the line and you're saying I'm here and so that's got me thinking something’s got to be done better than that because you have to apply you have to solve for where it's needed at that time. Time is crucial because if one feels that there is such a delay like that, you feel pushed back. You feel like does anyone see what I'm seeing? Does anyone see the side of where we’re at? Understand?_ (58 year old student)

_Millions of millions of dollars are being spent on the returning citizen to come home and reenter into society, you got all these people starting up these programs for reentry but they're not doing reentry work. . . . Reentry starts before you get off the prison grounds_ (60 year old grandmother).

Participant continued,

_I had a probation officer. She never drug tested me and every day I went (this was like 5,6 years later) She never drug tested me and I started drinking, smoking and every day I went I was hoping that she would drug test me but she never drug tested me. She would come in the door, look to see if I was there, Okay see you next week but that's the way it is out here. Society, we need to change our thought process. They give a lot of money to behavior science places however every time I personally went to these behavioral science places there was some type of conflict_
between myself and the facilitator because the things that I needed to get me straight were not the things that they were talking about (38 year old social service provider).

It’s sad, I see people daily on the street. Because they can’t stay at the Rescue mission, they can’t stay at the Salvation Army, they can’t stay here or there and they have to walk destinations and nobody will give them a bus token to get somewhere (48 year old laborer).

The community support that we think is always there is hard to get support from due to funding. There was . . . a lot of times . . . there were two times when I could not get treatment for my addiction problems because I did not have health care coverage (60 year old grandmother).

Well, we do reentry. “Well, what do you do?” Resume writing. “Well is it just for ex-offenders? “ No, it’s for anybody. “Well, how many people do you have?” Well, we have seven or eight people. Okay, three of them are ex-offenders, it is not an ex-offender program. Forty percent of the people that come into this place are ex-offenders. So if you have a computer class is that for ex-offenders? You’re not doing anything for ex-offenders and yet your applying for grants because we have an ex offender program, well you don’t. And, you multiply that so it’s very inefficient and nobody knows who’s good and who’s bad (63 year Director, Non Profit).

There’s so much bureaucracy, there’s so much gaps, the information is not clarified. And the process is wait. . . . But they’ll get back to you when they’re ready to schedule you and say “well, you can come now.” And you’re like oh my God and you’ve been waiting for this for months. So wherever that need was, I had to figure out another way to get that need taken care of (he laughs) it’s the truth! It's the truth! . . . That’s what you’re still facing, the need is still great, still out here (48 year old student).

It's almost like we can present them with an assessment of their needs, help them to locate who hires convicted felons who hires people with past misdemeanor crimes .Where can I get house being a convicted felon? Where can I I apply for college can I go to a community college or can I go straight into the local University? Where do I get all these answers at? If it’s all in one spot or there’s a person at a spot that can walk with them through that journey to get all their answers, we would have more successful individuals (28 year old service provider).

Several participants acknowledged nonprofit organizations aided in their reintegration efforts relative to their immediate needs for food, housing, and shelter. A
follow-up question was posed and asked individuals if there were specific organizations that had aided them after returning home, one participant stated,

*I went to Catholic communities and I went to a couple of other organizations around here. They helped me out with food and help me out with money and little bit to get medications and get things I need. So it was a blessing because if I didn't . . . if people didn't tell me about these places, I wouldn't have a clue. I'm grateful, I can even call on them right now and if I need something they'll be there* (63 year old, Director of Non-profit).

*There was . . . a lot of times . . . there were two times when I could not get treatment for my addiction problems because I did not have health care coverage. It wasn't until my home was raided and my children were removed from my care and placed in foster care and I was put into a drug court program and that drug court program paid for my treatment. So you don't get those alternative programming’s instead of always being put in jail. If I would not have had that, I don't know where I would be today because of that drug programming and completing that's programming I am who I am today* (60 year old community worker).

*I went to Catholic communities and I went to a couple of other organizations around here. They helped me out with food and help me out with money and little bit to get medications and get things I need. So it was a blessing because if I didn't . . . if people didn't tell me about these places, I wouldn't have a clue. I'm grateful, I can even call on them right now and if I need something they'll be there* (unemployed 53 year old male).

**Theme 5: Lack of Support**

Many participants expressed feelings of some of the challenged they faced from the community and feeling a part of society due to judgment of their offender pasts.

Former Governor Charlie Christ commented, “Once somebody has truly paid their debt to society, we should recognize it. We should welcome them back into society and give them that second chance. Who does not deserve a second chance?” (as cited in King, 2008).
When asked the question, describe some individual experiences you have had with others concerning your trust in others or others' trust in you as community member.

One participant stated,

*There’s only a handful of people that know about my past. I don’t disclose it to a lot of people because I feel still . . . right now because I’m still in transition. They might push me away or something* (48 year old landscaper).

*They don’t want you living in certain communities, they will not open doors . . . jobs . . . applications, still abandoning you when you apply for certain jobs. These are the things like “I’m not good enough” or I am not accepted with the corporation or the community in that perspective* (58 year old student).

The participant continues,

*It hurts. It makes you feel that hey you’re not a part of the community or the corporation and they deprive . . . you know what I can contribute because I have potential. Just because there was a setback in my life doesn't mean I don’t have potential or skills are in me that I can apply and give even if it’s on the emotional or psychological support in an establishment.*

*You can sense or whatever but when you go and you put in an application, you tell the story, you can sense certain feedbacks and say “Hey, I’m being judged for that” or you know you could tell when someone’s warm and honest and open with you. So we still face those judgmental issues maybe that's one of the reasons why that so many come out and they want to live their life quietly and breakaway and say hey . . . they don’t want to deal with that because they don’t want to do with that judgmental viewpoint they comes back at em’.* (53 year old community activist)

*They don’t want to deal with the judgment so . . . they isolate themselves?* (56 year old non-profit counselor)

*Because the Rescue Mission wouldn’t take me in because I was a convicted sex offender “we have children here, hold it” “Can you just put me on a cot over there, somewhere in the corner. I’m gone at 6 o’clock in the morning. You know, I don’t want to be out in the cold”* (50 year old community activist).

The five themes explicated in this study can explain the perspectives of feelings of returning citizens as they seek to reintegrate into the community. The findings can help nonprofit organizations, criminal justice professionals, and those involved with reentry
programming with the tools and resources that are needed from the vantage point of these ten participants. The remainder of the chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the central findings of the study.

Discussion of Findings

Stigmatization

The experience of reintegration is combined with concepts of stigma. Although varying widely in exact definition, the concept of stigma generally conveys a sense of disgrace, based on an attribute viewed as discrediting, which reduces the bearer from ‘a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one’ (Goffman, 1963: 3). The embodied experience of reintegration is inevitable without the associated consequences of stigma. In their conceptualization of stigma, Link and Phelan (2001, pg. 367) explain some ideas in relation to the concept. First, individuals tend to label and differentiate human differences, as a result of these labeled differences, we ascribe stereotypical attributes to these labels, in turn because of these stereotypes, labeled persons are then penned as "them", and characterized as "other", which is separate from "us", and "they" tend to lose status, and consequently are treated in a discriminatory manner with inequitable results.

Many participants expressed feelings of social isolation from the wider community. Because of the many statutory restraints placed on them relative to housing and jobs, many felt excluded from society. A prevailing sentiment was that they were afraid to reveal their past incarceration due to the inevitable judgment they would receive from others. Many felt that barriers to their reintegration revolved around problems of securing housing and/or employment and sometimes both because of their criminal convictions. Although many experienced familial support and acceptance, they felt that
others could not respect or appreciate their challenges of reintegration. The inevitable strengthening of insular ties can lead to a marginalization or social isolation within the context of the wider community. Many offenders cited personal experiences by which they felt stigmatized by the wider community. Many felt they had been labeled as “flawed” or “bad” because of their past incarceration, which led them to isolate themselves from the wider community. Several cited the financial and emotional support received from family as reasons why they returned to neighborhoods, even as they encountered social barriers to reintegration. However, some commented that although the church served as a mediating structure in their lives, they still felt judgment from church members. One participant commented that he returned from prison with a sense of purpose and hope, only to have the light dim as he became aware of the realities of being labeled an ex-convict.

Although many displayed a positive sense of agency by which Maruna (2001) explained that when ex-offenders try to succeed, they rebuild a sense of their “personal narrative,” and adopt a revised version of their life story, one which reinterprets life events and personal priorities in potentially pro-social ways. In other words, their rebuilt positive narrative acts to underpin their pro community behaviors versus reverting back to previous criminal activities. In their effort to rebuild their reputations, many found society still harbored a distrust of their motives, and frequently family bonds had to be rebuilt. Many experienced homelessness and scant resources for a period, which further exacerbated their sense of isolation and marginalization. Reentry can be a difficult task, especially for individuals who may have victimized family and friends (Rose, Clear, & Ryder, 2000). Sometimes, upon reentry, individuals may find their families have moved
or are not welcoming to them (Fleisher & Decker, 2001) which can hamper one's sense of belonging.

**Advocacy**

Many citizen groups emerged from advocacy work in the 1960s and 1970's. Much of this work centered around partisan and policy concerns. Many of these group efforts were citizen groups meant to address issues such as constitutional rights and the environment. Skocpol and Fiorina (2004) have examined the recent transition from membership in civic organizations to advocacy, especially in the area of rights oriented groups. These advocacy groups hold a special appeal for marginalized persons of which many perceive they have been excluded from traditional forms of civic participation in groups akin to the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and civic organizations (The Rotary Club). The researchers further explain that with the proliferation of non-profits and public agencies that "provide services, but are not rooted in the community" (257). They further explain that these advocacy groups expand the definition of what it means to be civically engaged in the community and represent many new voices and provide alternative routes to democratic influence for citizens. Skocpol and Fiorina argue that the changing landscape of citizen engagement from a historical-institutional aspect has less to do with social or political trust, and more to do with forms of participation that either include or exclude the average or less privileged citizen (16).

Advocacy is one way by which marginalized groups leverage their social and political capital to affect change at the community level. Several interviewees expressed poor support of persons at the national and state level. Advocacy work is especially beneficial to those who have perceptions of stigmatization and disenfranchisement in the
community. Involvement with advocacy work helps former offenders create pro-social identities, and many expressed they felt that it was their attempt to lessen the effects of stigmatization in the community.

Campbell and Deacon (2006) observe that even if people are not subjected to explicit discrimination, they may still ‘internalize’ adverse perceptions, which affect their likelihood of challenging or addressing devalued status. One way individuals may choose to respond to stigma is by resisting or by looking for a change in circumstance (Major and O’Brien (2005) and Pinel (1999). In many cases these individuals identify effective coping strategies aimed at reducing the threat of stigma, through advocacy and support.

Several participants felt compelled to be involved as community activists. Many commented that because of the lack of financial resources and the inability to attain employment or permanent housing that engagement in the community was problematic. For example, many participants had not formally joined or were active in traditional civic organizations, but they were interested in working with advocacy groups to help support initiatives that helped individuals reintegrate. In this manner, many felt their contributions could be readily identified and could make an immediate impact in the community. A range of behaviors can symbolize civic engagement in an urban and marginalized community. Rallies, dissemination of information, circulating petitions, all act in concert and add both a nuanced and enlarged definition of what it means to be civic minded or engaged (Ginwright, 2010).

Moreover, because many expressed feelings of alienation from traditional civic routes, they instead pursued activities that advanced their self-interests as returning citizens. Many were knowledgeable about or worked on reentry initiatives. One proposal
titled, "Ban the Box" requires employers to refrain from asking about criminal justice status on job applications before assessing the qualifications of applicants. This speaks to the collective political efficacy of marginalized communities around a central aim (Fine & Harrington, 2004). Still others were acutely aware their criminal pasts and infractions were barriers to establishing trust with community members. Many commented that in order to become a constructive force in the community that one had to engage in activities that showed them in a better light. This was one of the prescient sentiments that came to light in the interviews – one of, I not only have to do good, but be seen doing good. Giving back is one such way they believed their reputation could be restored or repaired.

**Fractured Networks**

Social capital can be defined as the social resources that exist in the relationships between individuals and groups wherein such resources can be accessed and used to reach individual or collective goals (Bourdieu & Coleman 1988; Lin 1999; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Furthermore, social capital exists in the relationships between people (16). It has been used to explain a variety of pro-social behaviors, like collective action and community involvement. Many of the interviewees felt that the connections of family members and friends endured both before and after their incarceration. Many commented that the bonds of family helped to sustain them both while there were in prison and after their release. Research has found that strengthening the family network and maintaining supportive family contact can improve outcomes after prisoners are released (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001; Sullivan, Mino, Nelson, & Pope, 2002). However, it should be noted that three participants commented that although their environmental needs were met through
these relationships, a lack of emotional closeness was lacking. Several were rebuilding these relationships that established a “new normal” for both communication and emergent independence. Many commented that close friends also helped with their reintegration efforts in such ways as providing financial and emotional support; however, many abandoned the social networks they felt would not be useful in their quest to “stay on the straight and narrow.” Furthermore, many used their new found networks to improve their own social standing in the community and to also to link with available employment opportunities, or housing. The participants sought out and formed networks with other individuals they perceived knew and had experienced the challenges of reintegration. As a result, many collaborated on reentry initiatives that supported returning citizens. Putnam (1995) indicated that elements such as networks, social trust, and norms bring workers/individuals together for “mutual benefit” (p. 67). Additionally, Adler and Kwon (2002) asserted that social capital has contributed vastly to the growth of organizations, groups, and/or institutions. It is apparent from the interviewees that the participants viewed themselves as part of a wider community that worked collectively to address the disparate treatment they believed they received as former felons. However, many lacked the bridging social capital needed to foster social inclusion.

Granovetter (1973) speaks to the strong, weak and absent ties that inform social relationships. Although, many of the participants experienced what Granovetter refers to as “nodding ties” described as people who may live on the same street or neighborhood, in comparison to strong ties, so it follows that in an wholly-enveloping social network individuals are at a disadvantage with only a few weak connections in the community, compared to individuals with multiple weak links, as they are disconnected with the other
parts of a community. Cross et al. (2001) and Hofstede (2001) further buttress the theory of social networks by explicating the factors of effective and ineffective knowledge sharing among individuals. Whereas Lin (1981) states "weak ties have positive effects on occupational status only when they connect one to high-status individuals" (as cited in Granovetter, 2012, p. 209). Conversely, for those of lower station, weak ties to those of similar status were not especially useful. Bridging networks are characterized as inclusive and outward looking” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Bonding social capital arranges group solidarity which can be useful for maintaining community cohesiveness and support. Adversely, the unity brought about by bonding can have negative consequences by creating a feeling of segregation among non-group members. As evidence, the participants used their social networks to bond with others with whom they were familiar and trusted, but lacked bridging networks with others outside of their homogeneous groups. Although one participant commented that he felt he had deeper, embedded connections within the community because of his former professional ties which enabled his access to other groups, this circumstance was absent for the majority of the participants.

Bridging is a type of social capital that is vital to public life in diverse societies, such as many American communities, but it is the hardest to build (Putnam 2000; 2003). As discussed previously, reciprocal transactions of generalized exchange occur within structural networks. In these associations, trust is the connection that holds societies together. Putnam (2000) asserts that “trustworthiness lubricates social life” (21). Moreover, as interactions and exchanges continue between groups of people, a norm of reciprocity begins to develop and social capital is built within these social networks
(Cook 2005; Putnam 2000). However, many participants expressed feelings of social protection within their in-group networks because of the sanctions and exclusionary practices of institutions and the community in general.

**Mistrust**

Social trust can be explained as the belief that others will not, at worst, knowingly or willingly do you harm, and will, at best, act in your interests (Gambetta, 1988; Hardin 1999; Warren; 1999). Definitions of trust typically refer to a situation characterized by the following aspects: One party (trustor) is willing to rely on the actions of another party (trustee); the situation is directed to the future. In addition, the trustor (voluntarily or forcedly) abandons control over the actions performed by the trustee (Bamberger, 2010; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

In a recent Pew Study, a question was posed to 2000 respondents, “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” Some 45% of respondents in the Pew survey say the former, while 50% say the latter. Moreover, Some 50% of those who describe their household as professional or business class have high levels of social trust, compared with 30% of those who describe themselves as working class and 18% among those who describe themselves as the struggling class (Pew Research Center, 2006). The previous national results mirror the perceptions of those returning to the community. In so far as many participants expressed similar sentiments about trust among their family, friends, and neighbors. Most took the stance that they were working to rebuild trust by helping out their community and neighbors in order to rebuild their reputations after incarceration. At least half of the participants commented that their ability to trust others had been eroded.
by years of incarceration. Several participants exercised a pragmatic approach to trust that has been influenced by their interactions with others in the community. It was ironic that many felt they were not trusted by the wider community but yet reserved judgment of others’ motives. Respondents expressed more particularized trust within group than generalized trust across other ethnic or economic groups. Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) posited that “particularized” trusters may be as involved in civic life as generalized trusters, but they will restrict their activities and good deeds to their own kind (p. 6). This was evident when some commented they worked with the wider community to address reentry policies, but relied upon social support from their in-group associations.

Several expressed a barrier to trust with institutions because of the statutory limitations placed upon them after incarceration. The stigma of incarceration is often seen in labor market studies where employers express a strong preference against hiring ex-offenders (Lopoo and Western, 2005). This lack of employment opportunities for individuals with a criminal record, housing insecurity because of a felony conviction, and the inability of participants to qualify for other types of government programs led many to believe that these institutions were further punishing them even as they had been released. As stated by Sztompka (1998), such measures typify a structural paradox in that these practices in fact operate to institutionalize distrust for the sake of trust.

Uslaner (2002) posited that an increase in economic and social opportunities have a positive effect on increased generalized trust among persons (p. 8). "The social isolation model states that the dominant group will always choose to maintain a social distance between itself and minority groups, and to this end may employ discriminatory laws and policies" (McKean, 1994, p. 88).
The overall perception of the study group was they were still being punished for crimes for which they had paid their debt to society. Many could not understand the legal sanctions imposed, even as they had been released from prison for several years. They cited these reasons as obstacles that prevented their full inclusion in society. At least two participants stated that probation and parole were institutions that served more of a surveillance function than helping them to locate employment and housing prospects, which further eroded their trust in government and organizations. As is often recognized, formal institutions at a macro level are greatly significant for trust formation between collaborators in micro situations. In the literature, cases abound that characterize governmental rules and regulations, a system of law and a police force, as well as their ability to enact rights and obligations, sanction violations, etc. (see, for example, Luhmann, 1979; Shapiro, 1987; Zucker, 1986).

Five participants struggled with trusting helping professionals, which is attributed largely to their experiences throughout the legal process (Marshall & Serran, 2004). Because ex-offenders may have trust issues with therapists based on past experiences with assessment results, and thus link the therapist with those in authority rather than as a helping professional (Marshall & Serran, 2004).

**Lack of Support**

Moreover, at least half of the participants related their experiences with concern to receiving help with drug and alcohol addiction. Several had co-occurring mental health needs that remained unaddressed after their incarceration, due to a lack of medical insurance. Ex-offenders are frequently unable to obtain healthcare services necessary to address mental and physical health care issues post-release, even though they were
ostensibly provided similar services during incarceration (Moffic, 2010). This lack of access to effective and affordable treatment for mentally ill ex-offenders is a factor in the growing barrier to reintegrate into the wider community. The participants related and expressed feelings of frustration with both the number and poorly supported local and community resources available to address their needs. At least three participants stated they suffered Posttraumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) because of the heightened anxiety and hyper vigilance that comes from being in a corrections environment. Although several recounted stories of their incarceration, they failed to seek treatment even several years after release. Many expressed that a culture of incarceration is misunderstood by many employed in social service agencies designed to help offenders. Many insisted that many professionals took a cookie cutter approach to their needs, instead of trying to understand the context for their experiences. Rotter, McQuisition, Broner, and Steinbacher (2005) noted that understanding the individual culture of ex-offenders is vitally important to reintegration. Returning citizens do not have identical experiences in their transition from prison to the community.

Understanding the individual culture that is experienced by the offender during incarceration is also vitally important at the micro level of life after prison (Rotter et al., 2005). Even in cases where help is available in the community, many ex-offenders will not utilize the resources due to the social stigma, fear of being institutionalized, and/or mistrust in the mental health system (Petersila, 2001). It appears what is needed is adequate funding that allows organizations to recruit, hire, train, and support the returning citizen with consistency, cultural competency, and efficacy. Some participants commented that the lack of accountability and the sparse availability of support
especially in the areas of housing and employment were challenges that confronted them and made their reentry efforts cumbersome.

All participants echoed sentiments that the services they were told were available in their respective communities seldom existed. Several stated they spent a lot of time and many frustrating instances whereby they bounced from agency to agency looking for guidance and services to no avail. With the exception of two persons, the remainder stated if it had not been for the support systems of family and friends, they would have resorted to unlawful activities in order to meet their needs. Additionally, the lack of coordination of services and resources in the community were troublesome.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to understand the process of civic engagement among ex-offenders with the community and civic organizations. Through the use of grounded theory interviews, data were collected about the perceptions and experiences of returning citizens with respect to social capital and trust. The source of data for the results and analysis of this study were 10 formerly incarcerated individuals in Youngstown, Ohio.

While issues associated with former offenders and environmental factors after release have been explored including civic exclusion (Chiricos et al., 2009, Clear, 2007; Manza & Uggen, 2006) limited research and attention has been paid to civic engagement activities after incarceration (Fox, 2010). No previous study of former offenders' perceptions and attitudes of former offenders and their civic engagement activities has been found. As such, although this study focused on the civic engagement and trust in community and institutions is discussed within the context of existing literature related
civic engagement, social capital and trust. The findings have also been discussed within the context of relevant studies of advocacy, social capital and trust, primarily with civic organizations and institutions. Five core themes related to advocacy, stigmatization, fractured networks, social mistrust, and lack of support are identified as a result of the analysis of data collected in this study. Although previous studies addressed the environmental factors of reentry, none have addressed how the core themes in this study affect civic engagement and social trust for the returning citizen. However, findings from this study contribute new findings to the field of study dealing with reentry and civic engagement among the study population.
CHAPTER V
LIMITATIONS, CONCEPTUAL MODEL, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored how selected former offenders describe and explain the civic engagement process after reintegration into the community. In this concluding chapter, the limitations, conceptual model, and implications are discussed. Also discussed, are the findings in relation to how the elements of this model are both consistent with and different from prior research. The conceptual model provides a framework by which potential implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are explained.

Introduction

The central task of this exploratory was to develop a conceptual framework for further study to be based. This framework can be titled "The Theory of a Paradox of Trust". Although all of the narratives were different from each other, throughout the study the actions and decisions expressed by the participants illuminated the perpetual struggle to maintain an orderly life against the backdrop of stigma, social and civic isolation, as well as fractured networks. For some, the paradox of trust was compartmentalizing negative thoughts and emotions that they could not control. For others, they accepted the fact that they could not control society, and thus had to accept that there would be very little support from their respective communities. Still others felt that their offender pasts were hindered by the perceptions and institutional policies that
affected aspects of their lives. Lastly, others engaged in advocacy work to address the inequities in both the criminal justice system and institutional policies and regulations.

For the participants, the struggle for civic and social engagement was present from their immediate release from incarceration to current day experiences with challenges both in institutions and society in general with mistrust. The perpetual struggle with navigating their perceptions against the social reality of being labeled felon was evident in the data. One participant was dismayed by the process of reintegration in relation to civic action by and with former offenders by commenting,

"If they're not totally engaged (people in civic organizations) then it's like a half truth is a whole lie. If you're not totally engaged then you're what? Disengaged and it leads to further disengagement [participant]."

The theory of a paradox of trust involves five categories or themes the returning citizens felt were significant and added a level of concrete understanding of the reentry process in relation to reengagement with the community and organizations. The findings are then discussed within the context of the theoretical framework of the study, as well as within the context of existing related literature. This chapter concludes with a summary of key points presented. Direct quotations provide the foundation of qualitative and grounded theory reporting (Creswell, 2007) and increase the fidelity of the analysis and interpretations (Riesman, 2008). Many statements or expressions made by participants were overlapping or repetitive. In such cases, direct quotations of participants that are most representative of the research findings have been (May, 1986, p.149).

**Limitations**

As in every exploratory study, potential biases and presumptions of the researcher can compromise the validity of the research (Anderson, 2010; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010).
The literature suggests several problems that limit the accuracy of the data and analysis for that data. Those limitations are researcher bias, generalizability, participant selection, and participant bias. To address the aforementioned limitations, the following section both explains and outlines the steps taken to address these in the study.

To minimize the potential for researcher bias, the researcher kept copious field notes to engage in continuous self-reflection that identified any potential preconceptions throughout the study. This research was limited by the difficulty of maintaining, assessing, and analyzing in order to sustain qualitative rigor both at the outset and throughout (Anderson, 2010). By setting aside preconceptions and biases, it was possible to focus upon the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants. Another limitation was the sheer volume of in-depth interviews making categorization and interpretation of the findings difficult to present to readers (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher has made a concerted effort to provide a graphical depiction of the analysis, and to provide sufficient narrative, so that others can make their own independent judgments about the study. Participant error was another limitation. Because the researcher and the participants must engage in detailed accounts and interactions of the phenomena under study (Buckle et al., 2010; Hastings, 2010) thus, direct and meaningful dialog is necessary.

More broadly another limitation from an exploratory study are the findings are not generalizable to beyond the one studied. The context of the study focused upon individuals who have returned to a community dealing with the effects of structural unemployment, high poverty rates, and economic distress; therefore, the implications for this study are within the context of this sample of former offenders and the wider
community in which they live. Finally, the participants were drawn from an advocacy organization that acts as a clearinghouse of referral services provided to returning citizens. Therefore, many of the participants were both aware of and participated in community engagement activities that were sponsored by the organization. Perspectives and feelings may be different from those not involved with organizations advocating civic involvement. Given this study’s sample parameters, the model, as depicted in Figure 5-1, is based on the perspectives of participants who may be not representative of all former offenders. Participants included only those who were willing to speak to their experiences around their civic activities.

**Conceptual Model**

Based on this study’s findings, elements of an emergent conceptual model depicts how a paradox of trust exists between former offenders, and the community after a period of incarceration. The model begins with the concepts of civic engagement as discussed by Putnam (2003) and Arneil (2006). Putnam has as a foundation social networks and embedded within these networks are social trust which he proposes is a cornerstone of civic engagement and social capital. Arneil (2006) argues that because of political and economic inequalities in society, the way by which individuals experience engagement is dictated by other factors to include access to resources and political power. The quality of one's networks as discussed by (Putnam, 2003; Coleman, 1988) act as a catalyst towards social action and can either to motivate or demotivate individuals as they decide to become involved with civic institutions.

The influences that emerged from this study are: stigmatization, fractured networks, social mistrust, lack of support, and advocacy. A majority of the participants in
this study described being influenced by some combination of these elements with relation to civic activities and trust in the community. Next, the model outlined the concepts the steps required in the process. These influences can act as either facilitators or barriers to the returning citizen.

Figure 5.1. Paradox of trust conceptual model.

Findings from this study indicate that some forces may influence the decision to engage in civic action. For example, a key influence described to by a number of participants as influencing them both before and after incarceration is their encounter with society which centered on their feelings of stigma. However, stigma by which several commented that their criminal pasts when revealed could make them a target for further discrimination. Many individuals stated that because of drug and alcohol abuse as well as untreated mental health conditions further exacerbated their feelings of isolation. The next concept of the model involves social networks, which is more appropriate to
term as fractured networks. As many researchers have already noted (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 1997; Simmel, 1955) both the quality and quantity of one's networks can either foster or hinder civic action. Many of the participants expressed that although much of their support both during and after incarceration were family networks, they admitted that they lacked bridging networks to groups outside of their immediate circle. Many expressed that, because of their unique positions as ex-felons, their support systems were comprised of other offenders or people involved in alcohol and drug addiction support networks. A critical finding prescient in this study classic civic engagement with traditional or homogeneous networks, trust is suggested as the glue that fosters cooperation among individuals. Participants in the study offer a more pragmatic approach to social interaction. The paradox of trust served to alienate this group from traditional networks precisely because of their marginalized status in society. Social mistrust is another component that participants provided reflection. As the participants began reintegration into the community many experienced discrimination in employment, housing, and even food assistance. What was unexpected is that the many ways by which former felons experience codified and statutory limitations, even as these respondents were most in need of the services that these types of help were intended. A society is encouraged to support institutions and the political process precisely because we view these institutions and policies as guardians of neutral competence and efficiency based on the principles of fairness, justice, and equality of opportunities. However, the participants all echoed sentiments that process of government and society in general acted as barriers to marginalized groups. While in fact they understood that they had to earn their way back to a status of trustworthiness, they felt helpless in their efforts to assuage the
prejudices of society which they expressed hampered their efforts to resume a productive life.

The conceptual model indicates the lack of support services for those who are returning to the community dampens their ability feel part of a whole. Many expressed frustrations that the social and concrete needs they required for everyday subsistence was either non-existent or lacking. Many felt that even prior to their release they were assured that civic organizations and government help could aid in their reentry, only to discover that the help and the support they counted upon was not present. Many expressed having very limited resources to rely upon and resorted to reliance on friends and family which further stressed their social networks. Many majority of the participants stated the lack of help for drug, alcohol addiction, and mental health services were little, if not absent. And, as help was evident they felt that the institutions engaged a cookie-cutter approach without taking into account their unique social, financial, and family situations. This affected their ability to view civic organizations as really helpful with both their social and concrete needs. Others talked about the bureaucracy involved even when they were offered help. The endless paperwork and "hoops" they had to navigate further eroded trust in said organizations. Barber (1983) observes that when people are dependent upon government for their safety and security needs, the stronger their expectations, the higher their disappointment is when their concerns are not addressed.

Quite surprisingly what emerged from the data is the concept of advocacy. Many participants either were engaged in or expressed that they were working on initiatives, such as "Ban the Box", and working to alleviate housing insecurity due to felony convictions, and other efforts in an attempt to address their disadvantaged position in
society. Many either helped or wanted to create non-profits to address their concerns with discrimination in housing and employment. Many felt because of the traditional paths to change policy were blocked, they wanted to engage in activities that benefitted their social group. They commented that the value they bring to any endeavor in terms of their talents, time, and knowledge of the criminal justice system and the requisite challenges of reintegration helped them to give back to other similarly placed individuals. In fact, some commented that because of their under-utilized talents and abilities caused them to look for and gravitate toward initiatives to address their issues. Additionally, many responded that advocacy was a pro-social way by which they could give back, by managing and rehabilitating their reputations in general.

**Relationship of the Model to Prior Research and Theory**

The themes that emerged from this analysis are both consistent with and different from prior research and theory. First, similar to the civic engagement theories of Fukuyama (1995) and Putnam (2000) shed particular light on the thinking that there is a decline in overall trust in the American politic. Although this would seem to confirm the perceptions of the study participants, it is wholly for an entirely different set of circumstances. Portes and Vickstrom (2011). Perkins et al. (2002) posit that bonding social capital consists of norms, reciprocity, and trust within social networks. Similarly, Putnam (1995, 2000) also states that bonding social capital consists of trust and norms of reciprocity among members engaged in civic action. As such, this sense of collective responsibility heightens the desires of individuals into collective gain. Others take a more structural approach to bonding social capital. Coleman (1988) stresses the cohesiveness
of structural social networks that facilitate reciprocity and trust that heightens advantages for the entire group.

All of the aforementioned theorists convey the building blocks of networks and their respective association with the formation of trust into communal action. However, the study participants express that the networks they experience are fractured and mainly consist of individuals made up of family and friends. However, in contrast to the study populations prior theorists have interviewed, these participants had fractured networks that impeded their ability to form connections outside of their "bonding networks" to more "bridging" networks as emphasized by both Putnam (2003) and Granovetter (1984) that facilitate collective action and thus an increase in collective efficacy. Most importantly, it should be noted that theorists who have studied both social capital, and the formation of trust studied groups of individuals who were mainly homogeneous and not a marginalized group in society. This study attempted to examine and explain how the formerly incarcerated view civic engagement through the concepts of trust and networks as they navigate reintegration into the community.

Arneil (2006), Rothstein (2005), and Dawes et al. (1997) explain that people do not want to be taken advantage of, but neither do they want to be free-riders – they want to be cooperative if there exists a good outcome, non-cooperative when the other person does not contribute. Thus, to get a balanced result, they adjust their own behavior or their expectations based on the other person's performance. This seems to be confirmed by the study participants in that their expectations of civic organizations and government institutions. As Uslaner (2002) posit, inequality breeds mistrust, especially in relation to marginalized groups. This observation is apparent with the study population, many of
whom withdrew from traditional routes of civic engagement and experience
disconnection from society based upon discriminatory measures in housing and
employment. To paraphrase one participant, how can you invest in a community that is
not invested in you? Put another way, Luhmann (1979) observes that it is precisely
because of institutional distrust underpinned by constricted control and monitoring
measures that help to foster mistrust. The study aligns with the research in that
institutionalized mistrust is experienced by these participants in various forms of
statutory limitations that exist in hiring, housing, and in some instances financial
measures that serve to protect the public, but the participants experienced these measures
as discriminatory and unfair. Thus the participants felt excluded, which further leads to
civic disengagement from the wider community. However, what is somewhat surprising
is that although traditional civic engagement was depressed, the study participants
overcame these challenges by advocating against policies they perceived as unfair. For
example, many participants either were interested in or had formed non-profits that
offered support to individuals returning to the community. Many cited that they felt the
need to give back, and the common activities cited were working as drug and alcohol
sponsors, providing housing to individuals recently released from incarceration, and
becoming involved with non-profits that acted in the interests of those who are returning
home. Some acknowledged that through their work on behalf of others, they realized the
importance of advocacy as a connection to, and engagement with the wider community to
further these goals. To buttress this finding, a recent study demonstrated that when asked,
more than 73% of former offenders would give back if presented with the opportunity to
do so (www.communities.gov.uk).
Implications

“A society can control effectively only those who perceive themselves to be members of it” (as quoted in Young, 1971, p. 52). Reengaging formerly incarcerated individuals with the communities to which they return is a challenge only recently recognized by funding agencies and human services. The ability for former offenders to reintegrate has as much to do with reforming an identity as it does with the systems in which returning citizens engage. Often, the onus for civic engagement is for the offender to find opportunities by which to “give back” to society. However, this study has affirmed civic engagement is as much a community outreach exercise as it is individual. For returning citizens to feel invested in the collective well-being of society, communities must be responsive and accountable to the person returning. Bazemore and Stinchcomb (2004) acknowledge communities can be “both a major stumbling block and a major resource” for returning offenders (p. 1). However, Cox et al. (2011) suggests when civic engagement is harnessed, civil society and democratic governance extend inclusivity of the entire citizenry in the decision making processes.

The following section will examine the potential practice and policy implications that emerged from this study that should be considered. This study bears out that if community members are engaged in the process of reentry, the returning citizen can form networks and reintegrate in such a manner that they are viewed as a part of, rather than separate from the community. Therefore, voluntary and civic organizations should make available opportunities that include, rather than exclude those returning in constructive measures that benefit the community. This study brings to light that without building trust, individuals may have a harder time feeling a collective responsibility to the overall
well-being of society if they feel the potential for judgment. The findings also emphasize how, when individuals are distrustful, diverse mediations to those used to build trust may be required to reduce distrust. These imply a need to focus upon the consistency of services and supports, ensuring promises are kept and actions are communicated and explained clearly (i.e., fairness, equality, integrity). The challenge for organizations and the community at large are to seek ways to counteract the impact of the factors identified that create distrust, whilst at the same time supporting and assisting those that create and maintain trust.

This study has outlined the unique ways by which the study group encountered reintegration as they traversed life after prison. Many encountered professionals who treated their situation according to predetermined criteria and approaches. A more holistic, multidimensional approach to assessment relative to reintegration that links social, concrete, and emotional supports can address the varying situations in a pragmatic, yet innovative manner. Many of the participants gave voice to the lack of budgetary considerations with respect to reintegration. Further funding is needed that support reintegration, especially in communities that are already burdened with historical economic deficits. This is perhaps because many communities are ill equipped to deal with the financial challenges of reintegration with increased support in housing, employment, mental health and drug counseling services. This situation adds to the feeling of instability in the lives of ex-offenders when stability is precisely what they need. In fact, former offenders are released with only $75, a set of clothes, and a bus ticket. As such, many participants viewed time as a valuable commodity by which success or failure of a successful reintegration hinged upon readily available resources in
the community in terms of their concrete and social needs. All of these measures can help foster trust with returning citizens, and also demonstrate the importance of staying connected to the community in pro-social and constructive ways.

This study highlights that at a minimum, a concerted effort among both community members and organizations is needed to develop public education programs focused upon the needs of returning citizens about the types of program and institutional support needed in the community seem appropriate. These programs should identify some collective issues that face this population as a whole in a particular city, township, county, etc. For those groups of ex-offenders that may experience unique challenges—those ex-offenders with particular housing, or mental or physical health problems—communities should enlist general support and input into systems to serve this population.

For public administrators this study underscores the importance of promoting civic engagement among all sections of the citizenry. Many of the participants spoke to their need to utilize their time, talents and abilities to both give back and to rehabilitate their image in the community. Neighborhoods should solicit the participation in, and provide advocacy for programs that make available civic activities that benefit both ex-offenders and the collective community. Cox III et al. (2011) suggested that when civic engagement is employed, civil society and democratic governance make available inclusivity of the citizenry in the decision-making process.

Additionally, reentry professionals and other criminal justice administrators must openly address the challenges facing this population with their return to the community. Many observations that stemmed from the interviews was the need for frank and honest
communication about the challenges of reentry and perhaps the lack of supportive services in a particular community. One of the most significant findings in the participant interviews was un-met needs, specifically information regarding the preparedness of community services that address emotional, employment, mental/physical, and employment needs for the person returning. Open communication helps build trust and authenticity for both the ex-offender and the administrator, if the process is transparent and manages expectations. In this manner these public administrators can help ex-offenders with critical information, so they would not have to learn for themselves in a vexing dance of trial and error about the existing resources in a community.

Finally, this study highlights the need for policy makers to address the ever growing incarceration rate in the United States. The participants lay bare the collateral consequences of imprisonment both before and after incarceration, which call for the reevaluation and, where appropriate, the abolition of concomitant sanctions that states automatically impose on individuals convicted of certain offenses. It is with this recognition that any proposals for change must take account of the current situation of mass incarceration and the factors that led to it.

**Future Research**

Future research should include examine the phenomenon of mistrust in terms of persons in different states and metropolitan areas to determine whether the same or similar themes emerge. Additional research designed to build upon the findings of this study can assist researchers and practitioners in determining the extent to which the findings from this study can be applied those returning to the community. However,
themes identified in this study are sufficient for additional research and practical application based solely this study.

The findings from the study can serve as a beneficial foundation to further investigation on the context of civic engagement with former offenders. Especially in relation to those with differing times of release, offenses committed, and are younger in age. Other areas for further research include which programs or initiatives are most effective in building engagement with marginalized groups, and which practices by these institutions prove to be both efficient and effective. Since many participants expressed frustration with the lack of available resources, further research is needed that examine both the access and barriers to these means such as housing, medical assistance, drug and alcohol counseling, and employment opportunities for former offenders. Additionally, further research is needed related to civic engagement among marginalized networks, and to explain and describe the potential generative nature of these social relationships. For example, how might public administrators structure post release programs that provide civic engagement opportunities in the community? More research is needed that disaggregate concepts of the conceptual model to determine which have a more positive effect upon increased civic engagement among former offenders. Considering, that most of the study participants were ex-offenders who were older adults, and displayed a greater degree of self-efficacy, a quantifiable study might extend, for example to other subgroups with respect to age, race and gender. Moreover, what are the policies and practices of service delivery that inhibit or encourage trust between ex-offenders and practitioners? Finally, this conceptual model provides a framework for the elements needed to address some barriers to trust, and thus engagement with the wider society.
Conclusions

Communities must marshal their “social capital” to provide occasions “to develop shared norms and values and build relationships of trust and reciprocity” (Bazemore & Stinchcomb, 2004, p. 3; see also Putnam, 2000). This study affirms that trust and trusting networks are not unidirectional, but are instead dyadic. Parsons (1963) argues the bases of trust lie in "the processes and practices of institutional trust stems from "people defined as sharing one's values or concrete goals and in whose competence and integrity one has competence come to be thought of as trustworthy individual and types (as cited in Rompf, 2015, p. 113). In short, people come to trust institutions if their previous encounters affirm that these people or institutions are trustworthy.

One must view trusting networks as having a contextual basis. Generally, ex-offenders returning to the community have a lifetime of repeated interactions with institutions which in their view, are not to be trusted, chiefly corrections environments. In this manner any institution that ex-offenders encounter post-release serve as a proxy for all institutions. From this perspective, trust and distrust are on a continuum, and mutually exclusive, as Lewicki et al. (1988) state as trust decreases, distrust increases (as cited in Rompf, 2015, p.70). Distrust is commonly related to doubt, wariness, caution, defensiveness, anger, fear, hate, and feelings of betrayal and vulnerability (p. 71). Thus practitioners and administrators should not assume that an ex-offender will present a trusting attitude or demeanor, when in fact the opposite is true. Specific expectations are preceded by past experiences, and individuals update their expectations built on the available information they possess (p. 93). Thereby, when interactions with institutions and persons employed by these organizations are favorable, the ex-offender is more
likely to extend the scope of cooperation. Conversely, if institutions and practitioners simply echo sentiments of "trust me, I am here to help", the requisite policies and practices have to be proven in order to appear credible.

There are several ways institutions and administrators can build a foundation of trust and reciprocity with this group. Mainly, transparency must be underpinned by action, and not words. Consistency in practices and procedures is especially important with regard to ex-offenders, who have become wary of the lack of follow through with other entities. Institutions must be aware of each individuals' specific needs for emotional and concrete supports. Interaction-based trust, may play a more pronounced role, but a cookie cutter approach that offers no real solutions to those affected, does more harm than good in the facilitation of trust. Additionally, these findings indicate that we should revisit those collateral sanctions that are imposed without any real justification, other than to further punish individuals trying to rebuild their livelihoods and reputations.

This study has brought to light the importance for this group to build bonding as well as bridging networks within the community. Many of the participants relied on close family and friends for both emotional and social support. Only one participant indicated they had any close social connections within the community. Many participants relied upon existing networks for information sharing and referral to resources. However, many lacked bridging capital to the wider community. It is this researcher's sense that due to the stigma of incarceration, the informants felt more comfortable within the insular relationships of their close networks. Although it is worthy to note that even as all were reforming their social identity, they were amenable to reaching outside of their networks
for social and concrete support, especially as it relates to housing, employment, and other services.

A paucity of research exists relative to civic engagement and social trust among ex-offenders after release. Different theoretical foundations may be used to study the themes identified in this study. Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000) offered a social capital theory whereby individuals work toward a shared vision and goals for the collective benefit of the community. His work is critical to understanding how and under what circumstances individuals form, access, and sustain networks. Additionally, Tyler (1994, 1997, 2003) and Uslaner’s (2000, 2002) theoretical models helped to explain that reciprocity and legitimacy underpin both generalized and particularized trust by which individuals rely before deciding to invest in others or the community. A different theoretical foundation may be used to study the themes identified in this study. An approach offered by Bazemore and Stinchcomb (2004) focus on three dimensions of civic engagement: helping offenders to develop “prosocial identities,” changing “the community’s image of such persons,” and marshalling “community capacity” to supply emotional support and concrete help (p. 2).

The findings from this study provide important and original insight for both researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners. Although the findings from this study can be utilized without additional research, future research is recommended to assess the extent to which the themes identified in this study can be found within any community that has experience with an increasing population of individuals returning from incarceration. This study of the retuning citizen regarding their trust in civic institutions and perception with regard to civic engagement has contributed to filling a gap in the
existing literature. The findings from this study can be used to inform researchers and practitioners regarding the experiences and perception of the scant number of resources that ex-offenders encounter upon their release from incarceration, at least relative to the context of the research community in this study. This study additionally highlights the need for further research relative to social and concrete supports, not punitive measures needed for returning citizens. The civic engagement aspect of the findings undergird the need for systems and networks that can help foster civic engagement opportunities. This study has further implications for the criminal justice professional to address the reentry process in both a concrete and practical manner before the release of individuals into their respective communities. Upon reflecting on this study's findings, it is important to remember that the study participants although lacking in bridging resources, shared similar experiences of having quality bonding relationships, which if absent, could have been insurmountable for individuals with less resiliency, and social supports. Further research is needed for what works and what does not for particular individuals. However, these findings as well as other research have explicated the challenges faced by former offenders. It is with this understanding that both practitioners and public servants can and should take deliberate action to address the manner by which we engage those returning to the community. Finally, Young (1999) offers advice which may be the simplest, but the hardest to implement by which he espouses, “a new contract of citizenship which emphasizes diversity rather than absolute values” (p. 198).
REFERENCES


United States Census Bureau (2013, January 16). U.S. Census Bureau: State and County Quick Facts. Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Non-employer Statistics, Economic Census,


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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Civic Engagement  Directions: Please fill in the blanks and place an “X” next to the category that applies to you. Your answers will be confidential. Thank You.

1. How old are you? ______________

2. How would you describe your race and / or ethnicity? (please specify)
   ______________________________________________________________

3. What is your high school education level?  •Did not attend high school  •High school graduate  •Alternative schooling  •Some high school  •GED
   ______________________________________________________________

5. Do you have any college or special training?  •Some trade school  •Some college  •Some graduate school  •Trade school graduate  •College graduate  •Graduate degree  •Other (please specify) ________________

7. Are you currently employed?  •Yes  •No

8. What is your marital status?  •Single  •Cohabitating  •Married  •Divorced  •Widowed  •Other (please specify) ________________

9. Do you have any children?  •Yes  •No  If yes how many? (please specify) __________ Ages_
## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

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<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Completed HS</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Black</td>
<td>Completed HS</td>
<td>College graduate</td>
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<td>College graduate</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Part time</td>
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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Civic Engagement

The word “community” has a lot of different meanings. What do you think of when you hear the word community mean to you? Should people who have been in trouble with the law help out their communities? Is there anything that you have done to help out your community? Why or why not? [PROBE: volunteering, community center, etc.]? Can you please describe your experiences as they relate to voluntary activities including voting? Please be as specific and detailed as possible.

Have you currently sought out or received services from neighborhood associations and organizations designed to help offenders who have been recently released from a correctional institution. If yes, why? If not, why not? Please describe your interactions with these agencies.

Social Trust

Now I’m going to ask you some questions about people that you trust, for example good friends, people you discuss important matters with, or trust for advice, or trust with money. Some of these questions may seem unusual but they are an important way to help us understand more about your social interactions with others.

Thinking of close friends - not your husband or wife or partner or family members - but people you feel fairly close to . . . Can you describe the nature of your relationship with them?

Describe some individual experiences you have had with others concerning your trust in others or others' trust in you as community member. Please be as specific and detailed as possible.

Now, I will ask that you reflect upon your experiences with trust in institutions and individuals and how you think/believe these experiences have affected your involvement in voluntary activities (e.g. joining organizations, volunteering, voting)
We have been talking about a lot of issues and I wanted to give you the chance to add anything to any of the topics we've covered. In thinking back over the last hour are there any other thoughts or experiences you’d like to mention which are relevant to the things we’ve been discussing? And finally are there any questions you would like to ask me?
NOTICE OF APPROVAL

July 31, 2014

Miss J. Moore
659 North Road
Youngstown, Ohio 44511

To: Office of Research Administration

Re: IRB Number: 20140010 "Civil Engagement and Trust among Neighbor Drug Users and Resiidents"

Thank you for submitting your IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects. The application was approved on July 31, 2014. Your proposal is approved for minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established (or commonly accepted) educational settings involving normal educational practices.

☐ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interviews, or observations of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interviews, or observation of public behavior not usually conducted in public settings for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, or other information (including audio or video recordings) where the information is not identifiable or obtained at public office.

☐ Exemption 6 - Data and observations obtained in non-research settings by non-research personnel.

Animal care and use committee applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the original in any procedures that increase the risk to subjects, a teaching institution, or a non-research setting, the original IRB form must be reprocessed. Any changes to human or animal studies must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your file. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond that period, you must reapply. If you continue to use a similar protocol for another dissertation, the student must follow the guidelines outlined in the application.

cc: Raymond Cox, Advisor
    Francelle Cleveland, Chair
APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: An Examination of Reintegration and the Importance of Civic Engagement and Social Trust

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to examine offenders’ experiences and perspectives related to civic engagement and social trust in the community and civic institutions.

What you will be asked to do in the study: You will be asked to answer a series of open-ended questions and demographic questions (age, race, education level, etc.) about your engagement in civic activities that include voting and voluntary activities. Additionally, you will be asked to describe your experiences related to social trust in civic institutions and the community in general. This interview will be recorded by an audio recording device. You are under no obligation to be interviewed if you do not wish to do so. You are not obligated to answer any of the questions. You may decline to answer any or all of the questions, and you may terminate the interview at any point.

Time required: 90 minutes

Risks and Benefits / Compensation: There are no direct benefits, risks, or compensation to you for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. If there is anything that you do not wish to have quoted, you may say at any point during or after the interview that you wish to have it kept “off the record,” and it will not be quoted. If quoted your name will not be used and all names and places will be changed along with any distinguishing characteristics.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: Hope Michelle Moore is a Ph.D. Candidate working under Dr. Raymond Cox in the Department of Public Administration and Urban Studies at the University of Akron, Olin Hall, Room 223 B. Akron, Ohio 44325.
Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study: IRB Office, Polsky Building Suite 284, 225 S. Main Street, University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-2102; phone 330-972-7666.

Agreement: I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Name______________________________________
Signature ________________________________
Date_______________________