Ex-Offenders, Stigma Management, and Social Movements: An Organizational Case Study of Identity Work and the Reentry Process

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Todd Michael Callais, M.A.
Graduate Program in Sociology.

The Ohio State University
2009

Committee:
Dr. Ruth Peterson, Co-Chair
Dr. Townsend Price-Spratlen, Co-Chair
Dr. Richard Lundman
Abstract
This research explores the relationship between Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA), a prisoner rights organization, and ex-offenders who affiliate with the group. My purpose in exploring this relationship is to determine what ex-offenders might gain from social movement participation. In addition, I examine how the structure of a specific social movement impacts the composition and trajectory of its members. I contend that there are numerous, undeniable effects of incarceration on ex-offenders; yet, the most difficult challenge faced during the reentry process involves ex-offenders making their own decisions and reintegrating into civilian communities. My research addresses the relative lack of literature on ex-offender identity work. An ex-offender who joins a social movement organization concerned with prisoner rights apparently: (a) has concerns about a lack of prisoner rights or a desire to see prisoner rights expanded; (b) experiences or identifies negative impacts as a result of her perception that the rights of prisoners and ex-offenders are incomplete; and (c) believes that joining the social movement will yield an advantage from which she will benefit. Based on three years of participant observation, forty-one in-depth interviews, and content analysis of CPA documents, I discuss the ways that CPA functions as a social movement and consider individual responses by ex-offenders to CPA membership, especially as these individual responses relate to stigma management and desistance from crime. I argue that membership in a group such as CPA is practiced and negotiated based on individual needs that are dictated
by stigma management identity work as well as the individual’s placement in social structure. As constructed, CPA has governmental, individual, familial, and inter-organizational mandates, but fails to act on governmental and inter-organizational directives. Moreover, attaining the structural goals dictated at the organizational level of CPA is far less significant to most CPA members than: (a) positive and/or negative experiences gained from participating in the internal struggles; and (b) viable routes toward the use of positive and/or negative narratives and frames of the group in constructing an individual stigma management identity. I find that CPA membership fosters viable pathways to redemption for individuals who might lack these pathways if they were not members of the group. Most importantly, members who lack traditional means to discover viable redemption use CPA membership as a way to construct successful stigma management. In addition, I report on the comparative paths taken by members who succeed without CPA, fail with CPA, and fail without CPA. Directions for future research are suggested
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my daughter, Riley Jo.
Acknowledgments

There are a number of people that have helped make this research possible. First I would like to think my parents. My father, Donald P. Callais and my stepmother, Mary N. Callais, have been incredibly supportive throughout the years and their encouragement toward the end of this process has been a major motivation for my completion of this dissertation. In addition, I would like to thank my mother, Kathy K. French whose unconditional love and support has been a constant reassurance during the more difficult parts of my journey through graduate school.

I would like to thank my co-advisors, Dr. Ruth Peterson and Dr. Townsand Price-Spratlen for keeping me balanced and active over the years. Ruth has been a calm and reassuring presence over the eight years that she has served as my advisor. Townsand has inspired a great deal of creativity in me and without him I don’t feel that I would be the sociologist that I am today. In addition, I would like to thank the third member of my committee, Dr. Richard Lundman. Dr. Lundman has always been a dependable mentor who greets me with a smile; I have appreciated that during my time at Ohio State University. Thank you to the faculties of Kenyon College and Denison University for being sensitive to my workload over the last four years. I would also like to thank my good friend Chris Huggins. In addition to being a good friend who has helped me with a number of questions I have had about the dissertation defense process, he also helped me with editing of final drafts. I would also like to thank Michelle Oyakawa for her
consistent support over the last year of this process. In addition to helping me with the editing process, Michelle gave me a great deal of encouragement during the final push for this dissertation and I want to thank her for helping me believe that I can and should finish this project.

On a lighter night, I would like to thank my dog, Maggie, and cat, Saint Paul. Their dependence on me for food and water, and their affection and companionship over the last six months has kept my stress level manageable and provided me with a great deal of enjoyment.

Finally, I would like to thank my two and a half year old daughter Riley. Riley is an intelligent, beautiful and funny little girl who has kept me grounded over the last few years. Her presence in my life has kept me focused because it reminds me that my future is about far more than me.
Vita

1997 ...................................................... Caddo Parish Magnet High School

2001 ...................................................... B.A. Sociology, University of Notre Dame

2003 ...................................................... M.A. Sociology, The Ohio State University

2002-2005 ...................................................... Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University

2005-2006 ...................................................... Visiting Instructor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Kenyon College

2006-2009 ...................................................... Visiting Instructor of Sociology and Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Denison University

2006-2009 ...................................................... Visiting Instructor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Ohio Dominican University

Publications


**Fields of Study**

Major Field: Sociology
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Chapter 1:

Introduction

S.N.A.F.U. IN CPA

To set the stage for this analysis of ex-offender participation in social movements, I begin by describing an encounter from my three year data collection with the Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA). A few hours after a meeting between five members of the CPA and a high ranking official in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC), Betsy called to tell me that the meeting had gone horribly. This was an incredibly important meeting for CPA because they had very little contact with the ODRC and this encounter could have given CPA the opportunity to increase its power in the state of Ohio. Betsy says “Well, big surprise, Trishelle messed up everything. And Dahlia and Deuce didn’t help much either.” She proceeds to tell me that the meeting, which was meant to be a brief introduction where both sides could discuss their ideas for the reform of the criminal justice system, started horribly because Trishelle told the ODRC representative that she had some things that she wanted to complain about. Betsy tells me:

*The man was starting off nice and just telling us about his ideas and after a few minutes it just turned into an interrogation and Trishelle started asking him how he could sleep at night knowing the things that get done to inmates in Ohio. And he tried to explain that he was new to the job and was interested in helping. Then*
Deuce responded by saying something about how he had heard other people say that before but that most ODRC people are the same. And I just wanted to die Todd, I really did, I wanted to turn invisible or run out of the room. And then Dahlia starts going off about all her religious crap and before I know it Trishelle is telling him that he ‘doesn’t know what he is talking about’ and then he asked us to leave. Ha..I mean...its like these people are animals, all they are good at is fucking up, what good does it do us to do that? I hate this.

Having already spent three years in the group, I knew that I would likely hear from each CPA member about this encounter at the next meeting. Betsy’s frustration is consistent with her usual response to CPA members and events. In our discussion, she failed to acknowledge or take blame for the fact that she was part of the decision to have Deuce, Trishelle and Dahlia go to the event in the first place.

At the next CPA meeting, only a few days after the encounter with an ODRC official, it did not take long to discuss the behavior. Trishelle ignores protocol and before the meeting can start announces “Look, you can be mad at me if you want but that asshole didn’t have any clue what he was talking about, we don’t need him. He’s a goddamn liar. He didn’t know what the fuck he was talking about. We don’t need him.” I could not help but wonder how a group that is attempting to initiate reform in the prison system could do so when the body in charge of making those changes will no longer speak with the group. I wondered how it was that we did not need him. As the discussion moves on Dahlia jumps in to say “Look, I admit that maybe we should have been a bit more civil but he wasn’t going to help us, when I brought up the issue of religious freedom, did you see his face? He didn’t care, he was just humoring us.” Dahlia consistently demonstrates a lack of trust in the system, one part of the reason I felt it ill-
advised for her to attend the meeting. However, this fact was never discussed when CPA selected the five members that would meet with the ODRC official.

During lunch I have the opportunity to talk with Deuce about the meeting and he told me that it does not really matter to him. I ask him if he will elaborate and he tells me “I mean, I just don’t see the point of meeting with that man, he definitely wasn’t going to help us. Part of me was really embarrassed but I didn’t notice anything special about him. I don’t just give respect, someone has to earn it...he didn’t.” Deuce works a lot on individual accountability and is one of the members of the group that is least geared toward reform, meaning that it was very unlikely he would appreciate the ODRC official or contribute a great deal to the the meeting. Lena, the final person at the meeting, simply told me “yeah, well can’t say that I am surprised, but what are you gonna do? We have an antsy group of people and these things will happen I guess.” Lena, the longest standing member of the group, rarely if ever complains about the group and does what is asked of her. After about thirty minutes of discussion in the meeting, the encounter with the ODRC was not mentioned again in the remaining months that I worked with CPA.

In this research, I am attempting to understand how a social movement group plagued by organizational failure continues to maintain membership over such a long period of time. Betsy, Trishelle, Dahlia, Deuce and Lena are long-standing members of the group and each feels that it is very important to attend meetings. All five of them have different responses to the meeting, yet they each report a genuine satisfaction with CPA. CPA has a number of long-standing members that are ex-offenders. Most of these ex-offender members stay in the group long enough that they have beaten the odds by staying out of prison for well over two years. While the meeting with the ODRC could be
understood as a failure, I attempt to demonstrate how each of the five CPA members that attended the meeting achieved something very important for their particular ways of dealing with the offender reentry process and dealing with the discrimination faced by persons exiting prison.

**RESEARCH PROBLEM**

People exiting prison (ex-offenders) are inextricably linked to the criminal justice system because of the punishment that they have faced, the conformity that is expected from them, and the spoiled image that prison forces them to manage. This link exists in the public consciousness and discourse and requires us to look for reasons why the majority of persons that exit prison in the United States will eventually return. A general review of the literature indicates that the ability to succeed during the prisoner reentry process has less to do with the punishment effect of prison than with a series of other factors such as social capital and social bonds (Maruna 2001; Pager 2009; Petersilia 2003). One factor that is often discussed but less often researched is the necessity for ex-offenders to develop positive self-identity and techniques for managing how they will be perceived in daily interactions; the process by which these factors are put into place is called identity work. While there are numerous, undeniable effects of incarceration on ex-offenders, the most difficult challenge faced during the reentry process involves ex-offenders making their own decisions and reintegrating into civilian communities. Even ex-offenders who are monitored by parole officers, required to take classes, or pay retribution, spend the overwhelming majority of their time free of state surveillance, where they must manufacture and control their own identities (Maruna and Immarigeon
This means that while state action and prison practice are important, investigating the ways that ex-offenders conceptualize and manage their lives absent state control can provide the best understanding of what distinguishes successful from failed reentry.

While the literature is limited, positive self-identity and actualization is consistently linked to positive outcomes for people exiting prisons (Maruna 2004; Maruna 2001; Matsueda 1992). Extant research focuses almost exclusively on the ex-offenders accounts of themselves as they relate to perceived desistance. This work treats identity as a static component of the ex-offender that exists independent of temporal and social contexts. With the exception of relationships with parents and partners, current research fails to properly demonstrate the effectiveness of identity work for ex-offenders attempting to regain a civic identity (Maruna 2004; Maruna 2001). Numerous questions, such as whether the desire to succeed is a necessary component of a desister’s identity and whether critical evaluation of criminal justice policy can be a positive part of the desistance process, have not generally been asked in the current body of research. While theories on reentry purport that impaired social development, loss of human capital and general social stigma are major factors that contribute to reentry failure, almost the entirety of policy and sociological research cover only the first two of these factors. Understanding how ex-offenders manage and create their identities, not just in interaction with family, friends and the state, but also with persons that will consider past criminality as one of many factors used to create initial evaluations of ex-offenders, is critical to attaining a more full understanding of the reentry process.

One context that allows us to explore the formation and presentation of identity is the behavior of individuals in collectives such as social movement groups. There are a
number of social movement organizations dedicated to prisoner rights and prison. These tend to be composed of ex-offenders as well as persons that have never been in prison. Yet, research on how individuals join and benefit, or not, from these groups is virtually non-existent. Social movement literature indicates a self-serving value to social movement membership and participation. The pioneering work of Hans Toch (1965) argues that the decision to participate in a social movement is based on the advantages that membership in a group can bring to the prospective and participating members. These advantages range from the comfort that is gained from being associated with a well-known and powerful group, the small but significant identity development that is gained through interaction with other group members, and the experience with presenting the self that comes from active public participation toward a social cause. Therefore, the decision for ex-offenders to be part of a social movement group concerned with prison reform and prisoners’ rights is a substantial one that says as much about the negotiation of identity as it does about political engagement. In addition, because these groups are often independent of state funding and control, they provide a unique opportunity to view how ex-offenders respond and contribute to political discourse. To date, research has not explored the unique contribution that collective efforts might make to successful reentry and desistance.

This study aims to address gaps in the literature by studying ways that a non-governmental social movement group contributes to the desistance process for ex-offenders. Specifically, how can membership and participation in a group that aggressively criticizes state policy and calls for better treatment of inmates and ex-offenders contribute to an individual’s identity work that requires personal goals toward
desistance? This research will begin to address the following gaps in the literature: (1) assessment of identity work (most importantly stigma management) as an important factor in the desistance process; and (2) assessment of collective efforts (e.g. prisoner rights groups) as important contributors to individual stigma management strategies.

OUTLINE OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

My research relies on the assumption that stigma is prominent and influential in the outcomes of ex-offenders. In Chapter 2, titled Stigma, Stigma Management, and Ex-Offenders: The Process of Reentry in Conflict with Public and State Discourse, I review the literature on stigma and recidivism to set up an understanding of the identity work of ex-offenders. This chapter relies heavily on the work of social theorists Erving Goffman and Michel Foucault. I start with a description of stigma as a social phenomenon that presents a unique problem for ex-offenders. Stigma is a process involving both a perceiver and a target, and, as targets, ex-offenders face the most difficult stigma to overcome: blemishes of individual character. I discuss justification ideologies that help to maintain stigma against ex-offenders covering a range of systems from the protestant work ethic to social Darwinism. Also included in this section is Foucault’s work on punitive/rehabilitative discourse as a control on the way ex-offenders are perceived in American culture. As discussed earlier, understanding the frames used by perceivers is a necessary and important component of gaining clarity on the identity work done by targets. Even when the target is interacting with a person who does not perceive her in a stigmatizing way, the target still has to take into account the possibility that she will be
targeted. This consistent potential to be stigmatized affects the identity work of ex-offenders even in situations where she should not need to consider and respond to stigma.

The latter part of Chapter 2 details available literature on stigma management. Erving Goffman’s *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity* organizes discussions of social, personal and ego identity. Justification ideologies help us to understand how Goffman’s concepts of social identity, personal and ego identity are managed by the target. I detail common stigma management techniques that involve how information is controlled and how the target presents himself in daily life. The chapter concludes with a discussion of new directions in stigma management literature. First, I highlight Shad Maruna’s work on the types of stigma management used by ex-offenders who successfully reenter society and ex-offenders who do not. Second, I apply Michel Foucault’s modern concept of Fearless Speech as a way to consider stigma management along with the concept of power, a concept that Goffman typically ignores in his work.

The underlying questions of this research consider what ex-offenders have to gain from a prisoner rights social movement group. In Chapter 3, titled *Social Movements and Stigma Management: The Interaction between Movement Frames and Personal Scripts*, I detail traditional social movements literature along with social psychological explorations of movement participation. There are many different ways to conceptualize success in a social movement. In this chapter, I begin with the idea that success is achieved when a group makes progress toward achieving a goal that is claimed at the organizational level. In the case of CPA, this would be reform of the prison system and an environment that is more structurally friendly to ex-offenders. I give an overview of the meaning and literature on three popular concepts within social movements research. First, I discuss
political opportunity, which considers taking advantage of or creating moments where change is possible. Second, I review the literature on resource mobilization which involves the utilization of both economic and symbolic forms of capital. Third, I consider the literature on framing, which is intentional work done by social movements to create appeals to members and outsiders. Taking into account criticism of these three measures of success I also consider new social movements literature which argues that movements can be considered functional and successful when geared toward symbolic change that has nothing to do with reform or resource distribution.

A second way of conceptualizing a successful social movement is to measure not what the movement achieves outside of its membership but instead what members achieve by being part of the movement. Therefore, Chapter 3 explores the social psychological elements of social movement participation. Guided by the groundbreaking work of Hans Toch, I argue that movements can be considered in terms of the ability to draw in and maintain a membership. I highlight a variety of methods used to recruit members to the group and introduce the concept of manipulation. Toch argues that many members are drawn in by latent appeals and ideological pushes. Part of this conceptual framework of social movement success is the individual level work done by members within a group. If a movement consistently fails to attain organizationally stated goals, then the reasons members stay in the group become a central question toward understanding the movement. Chapter 3 details a number of factors such as wish fulfillment, conspiracy and general psychological health as reasons for maintaining consistent membership in a group. This supports Toch’s notion that what a group accomplishes is far less important than what someone gets out of the group membership.
Research on stigma management in social movements among a stigmatized population requires a complex mixed-methods approach. In Chapter 4, titled Research Methodology, I identify the questions I attempt to answer and discuss the procedures used in this investigation. I begin by laying out three central research questions: (1) In what ways does CPA membership help ex-offenders with stigma and the desistance process; (2) For members who leave CPA, what reasons are given/observed for leaving the group; and (3) How does the organizational culture of CPA contribute to the individual needs of members who do not destigmatize or desist? In Chapter 4, I lay out my decision to employ a three-tiered qualitative approach that includes participant observation, in-depth interviews, and content analysis. I describe the thirty-nine months of participant observation with CPA including a breakdown of how many of each function I attended, how I gained access to the group, and how I carried myself in the field. Next, I detail the interview component of the research. In this section, I provide general information about my forty-one interview subjects, focusing heavily on the thirty-three ex-offenders in the sample. I also provide a discussion of the process that I used to code the interview data. Finally, I explain the content analysis component of my research. Although this is the smallest component of my work, it complements the observation and interview data. Chapter 4 concludes with the definition of important terms for this research project: reentry, desistance, stigma management, successful stigma management, failed stigma management, and organizational affiliation.

In the results section of this work, I organize the data into three different parts. In Chapter 5, titled The Dynamics of a Social Movement: Successes and Failures of a Complex Social System, I analyze CPA as a social movement. This results chapter comes
first because understanding the dynamics of the group and its successes and failures is a prerequisite to fully understanding the individual responses and stigma trajectories of the members. Chapter 5 begins by conceptualizing CPA as a successful social movement. First, I consider CPA through the lens of *New Social Movements Theory*, arguing that CPA can be considered as a group dedicated to post-materialist values. Second, I suggest that consistent membership in CPA indicates that there is a quality to CPA that serves the needs of many of its members, even if the group does not achieve the types of goals traditionally linked with social movement groups. The latter part of Chapter 5 conceptualizes CPA as a failure in a traditional movements’ sense. I use field notes and interviews to demonstrate the lack of action, focus, and desire to create meaningful steps toward social movement work. This part includes a discussion of resource mobilization in CPA considering the organization’s available funds and social capital. The membership, most importantly persons termed *Free Worlders* (never incarcerated individuals), are discussed as a resource used by ex-offender members of CPA. Next, I discuss the utilization of political opportunity within CPA, detailing the failure to use or create political opportunities. In this section, I also consider whether CPA actually takes steps to suppress the potential for its own success. Lastly, I discuss CPA’s use of framing both outside and inside the organization. Of the three main components of social movements, I discuss why CPA is most successful in using frames.

Of the thirty-three CPA members that I interviewed who are ex-offenders, not all can be seen as consistent members that had successful stigma management outcomes, although those qualities represent the majority of the sample. In the next two chapters, I categorize ex-offenders in CPA by the intersection of degree of affiliation and success in
stigma management. In Chapter 6, titled *Succeeding in a Movement: Developing Stigma Management Scripts via Social Movement Participation*, I create a continuum of the eighteen members with high affiliation and successful stigma management strategies. While a profile of each member is provided, the chapter is organized conceptually from those presenting traditional redemption scripts to contentious fearless speech. First, I discuss the ways in which CPA facilitates the use of redemption scripts for persons who might normally not be able to use them. I discuss the ways in which individuals identify themselves as superior to other ex-offenders and the manner in which some ex-offenders feed off interaction with free worlders to create positive outcomes. Second, I discuss members that primarily use CPA to create what I term a *Redemptive Contestation Script*. I highlight members who are able to use highly negative contestation frames utilized within CPA to find a pathway to redemption that relies on self-reliance. Third, I identify members of CPA that can be considered examples of the practice of *Parrhesia* as explained by Michel Foucault. This involves members use of contention frames to identify injustice and, in turn, the use of CPA as a policing agent for their own concepts of justice.

The success stories of Chapter 6 support the assumptions of Goffman, Foucault, Maruna and Toch. However, they represent just over half of the ex-offender sample. In Chapter 7, titled *The Other Members*, I present three other outcomes at the intersection of organizational affiliation and successful stigma management. First, I highlight members of CPA who maintained very low organizational affiliation with the group before leaving and who successfully managed stigma. Specifically I describe the various forms of capital that allowed certain members to leave the group after becoming frustrated with
the lack of traditional movement success and problematic group dynamics. Second, I discuss those members of CPA who had low organizational affiliation and failed stigma management. These seven subjects are divided into three groups: (1) Individuals who have such strong condemnation scripts they can not successfully move past stigma; (2) Individuals who seem committed to a criminal lifestyle; and (3) Individuals who possess condemnation scripts but attempt to shield these scripts in failed efforts to abuse CPA.

Third and finally, I discuss members of CPA who maintain high organizational affiliation with the group yet fail at successfully managing stigma. I begin by identifying members that use what I term opportunistic condemnation, meaning that they get value out of membership in CPA. This value, however, does not involve a desistance trajectory. I then discuss members of the group who use condemnation contestation scripts. In these scripts, members actually use the contestation frames within CPA to strengthen their own contestation scripts.

In Chapter 8, titled *Conclusion and Finishing Thoughts*, I bring all of this research together to discuss how it can be used. I begin by reviewing the purpose of this research focusing on the gaps in current literature and the questions that seem unanswered. I then discuss important sociological implications of my work with CPA, summarizing the major findings of this project by highlighting areas where the literature is supported. I also demonstrate counter-intuitive findings that suggest changes in the narrative on desistance research. I then move to a discussion of the limitations of my work, including sampling issues and problems with the field. I conclude with a discussion of what future research should be considered given my findings.
Chapter 2:
Stigma, Stigma Management, and Ex-Offenders:
The Process of Reentry in Conflict with Public and State Discourse

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I explore the concept of stigma and the process of stigma management. Ex-offenders face an interesting form of stigma because they are labeled both formally and informally by two powerful perceiving agents: the state and the general population. In this chapter, I introduce formal definitions of stigma focusing primarily on the groundbreaking work of Erving Goffman. This section introduces stigma as a social concept that must be both constructed and maintained while discussing various types of stigma, with additional emphasis on a specific type of stigma that Goffman terms *blemishes of individual character*.

As a social phenomenon that must be constructed and maintained, I consider the impact, function and justifications for stigma, especially in regard to ex-offenders. My research considers stigma as a concept belonging to both individuals and groups. This means that stigma must be evaluated at multiple levels of analysis. In addition, this research considers stigma as a process that is unavoidable in complex societies. Stigma makes targets one-dimensional, dehumanizing them and perpetuating the stigmatized
individual or group (Dovidio et al. 2003, Goffman 1963; Major and Crocker 2003; Maruna 2001; Stangor and Crandall 2003; Uggen, Manza and Behrenz 2003). I consider the possibility that this occurs because of the functional advantages of stigma and discuss justification ideologies specific to the cultural dynamics of the United States.

In addition, I discuss stigma management processes broadly and introduce identity management literature that expands our current understanding of how ex-offenders manage their specific style. Ex-offenders must manage their personal identity, because of their discreditable status. They have varied abilities to do this through the use of information control. The maintenance of ego identity as a gateway to reentry success is also considered. I briefly review the important work of Shadd Maruna on self-identity for ex-offenders and discuss how my current research expands upon his analysis. Finally, I consider how the Post-Structuralist sociologist Michel Foucault’s work on parrhesia, or fearless speech, can be synthesized with Goffman’s work to incorporate concepts of power toward the goal of creating a more complex understanding of stigma management.

WHAT IS STIGMA?

Stigma is a social phenomenon that, properly understood, contributes to our understanding of identity construction and social hierarchy in any given social system. In short, a stigma is something that designates a person as marked or spoiled (Dovidio et al. 2003; Goffman 1963). In his seminal work, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*, Goffman (1963) states:
the term *stigma* then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed. An attribute that stigmatizes one type of possessor can confirm the usualness of another, and therefore is neither creditable or discreditable as a thing in itself (p.3).

For Goffman, stigmas are historically and culturally constructed attributes that belong to relationships varying in size and nature. This means that stigmas can be understood, and responded to, in very different ways. At different points in time a person’s relatively static quality may or may not constitute the possession of a stigma.

When a quality is recognized and responded to as a stigma there are two processes that occur. First, the possessor of the stigma is identified as different based on the possession of this mark or quality. Second, and more importantly, the possessor is devalued based on the possession of this mark (Dovidio et al. 2003). This distinguishes stigma from deviance in that stigma is always an undesirable characteristic in the context in which it is being examined (Archer 1985; Dovidio et al. 2003; Frable 1993).

Understanding stigma helps advance the explanation for the practice and maintenance of social inequality. Also important in the consideration of stigma as an active process belonging to relationships is a discussion of the actors involved in the process of stigmatization. Stigmatization is an active process that involves at the very least two actors: one who is understood to give (although she does not necessarily need to have given) a stigma and one that is stigmatized. Goffman (1963) refers to these two groups as the “normals” and the “stigmatized.” While Goffman’s terms convey a meaningful distinction they are criticized for lacking agency in the construction and use of stigma. Dovidio et al. (2003) argue that to understand the placing of stigma on a person it is better to use the terms “perceiver” and “target.” Dovidio et al. (2003) state:
We note, however, that people who are involved in stigmatizing others may also be stigmatized in some way themselves. This may occur on a different dimension (e.g. deaf people stigmatizing others on the basis of race); on the same dimension, such as race (e.g., lighter skinned Blacks stigmatizing darker-skinned blacks). We also acknowledge, however, that ‘perceivers’ are not simply ‘observers’: they participate actively in the perpetual, memorial, interpretational, and attributional processes, and in the behavioral processes that can perpetuate and exacerbate stigmatization. Similarly, ‘targets’ are not passive recipients of stigmatization: they too are active perceivers who interpret, cope, and respond to stigmatization (p. 10).

Conceptualizing stigma as an active, ongoing process between two participants is important because it acknowledges that stigma is both constructed and maintained. The terms “perceiver” and “target” will be used for the remainder of this analysis.

Goffman (1963) identifies three types of stigma that targets might possess:

- Abominations of the body
- Blemishes of individual character
- Tribal stigmas

Three grossly different types of stigma may be mentioned. First, there are abominations of the body- the various physical deformities. Next there are blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty, these being inferred from a known record of, for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behavior. Finally, there are the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion, these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family (p.4)

Although it is possible for persons to possess multiple stigmas at the same time, the stigma against ex-offenders is a blemish of individual character (Goffman 1963; Maruna 2001; Uggen et al. 2003). Participation in criminal activity is seen as a flaw of character which impacts the possessor’s ability to make decisions and frame moral issues, presenting a risk to the perceiver.

With blemishes of individual character, targets may have the ability to control the information about their own stigma (Wilson and Hall 1992). Goffman (1963) distinguishes between targets that he describes as “discreditable” and “discredited.”
Persons that are *discredited* can assume that the differentness that they possess is either already known or apparent immediately while a *discreditable* person can assume that a perceiver does not know and cannot immediately perceive the stigmatizable quality in the potential target (Goffman 1963). When a blemish is not immediately apparent or already known, the target’s charge is one of information control and identity management as opposed to simply stigma management.

The impact of a stigma lies in its ability to make the target one-dimensional and functionally dehumanize the individual. Goffman (1963) argues:

> By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class (p.5).

Society creates a stigma for an individual and that becomes the frame through which perceivers will understand that target. This is not to say that a perceiver can not befriend, acknowledge the depth, or positively respond to a target. Instead, humanness is denied.

The preponderance of literature argues that stigma results in dehumanization, at least in part, because this is stigma’s function and design (Dovidio et al. 2003; Goffman 1963; Wills 1981). Crocker et al. (1998) argue that the existence of stigma in every known society is a compelling argument for considering stigma in a functional framework meaning that stigma facilitates processes that are essential to the proper working of social systems. My research considers individual level understanding of stigma as the result of culturally specific reasons that stigma exists in a community.
Literature indicates that there are two important general functions of stigma. First, stigma facilitates the development of a positive identity for perceivers. Downward-comparison theory argues that stigma serves the function of propping up the identity and performance of the individual doing the perceiving (Dovidio et al. 2003; Wills 1981). The ability of a perceiver to compare himself or herself to someone deemed lesser in some relevant social hierarchy is the ability to conceive of the self as strong. When stigma is considered as a process that exists in different contexts, this means that individuals can use the role of perceiver for their own good. Goffman (1963), although not addressing functionality as a central concern of his work, acknowledges this possibility at the individual and societal levels stating that “In theory, a deviant community could come to perform for society at large something of the same functions performed by an in-group deviant for his group; but while this is thinkable, no one yet seems to have demonstrated the case (p. 144).” Researchers (not necessarily motivated by Goffman) have attempted to demonstrate this function (Dovidio et al. 2003; Mackie et al. 1996). This research varies from the realm of terror management in response to abominations of the body (Solomon et al. 1991) to positive group attribution comparison in response to marks of character and tribal stigmas (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

Stigma plays a second important role in the functioning of society: maintenance of existing social conventions. In this manner, stigma serves as a device that justifies already existing forms of social and institutional discrimination. This sort of function involves the interaction between individual and group level forms of stigmatization. At the group level, stigma justifies the initiation and maintenance of disparate forms of treatment in a particular social system, such as prisoners (Dovidio et al. 2003; Foucault
Stigma makes group and individual targets negatively one-dimensional, facilitating the maintenance of inequality through justification for inequality. At the individual level, stigma functions to rationalize advantage for the perceiver and limit opportunity to the target. At this point, I have provided a general definition of stigma. I have also attempted to provide an introduction to what scholars consider to be variations in types of stigma along with a description of why stigma exists. In the following section, I aim to describe the process of stigma as it relates to ex-offenders in the United States of America in the twenty-first century.

**WHAT UNIQUE STIGMA DO EX-OFFENDERS FACE?**

My research considers societal definitions of the commission of crime, or the attribution of criminality, as a stigma that ex-offenders deal with for an extended period of time, if not for life, after exiting prison. The process of leaving prison is known as “reentry” and persons exiting prison face numerous reminders of their ex-offender status. Depending on the state and offense, many persons exiting prison face some form of surveillance ranging from regulated parole to neighborhood disclosure for life. For example, conviction for a felony in some states blocks the ability to vote, be employed in a number of jobs, and own a gun.

An assumption of this research is that stigma, most notably blemishes of individual character, are historically and socially constructed ideas that preserve hierarchy and inequality at the individual and group level. The stigmas belong to multiple relationships and associations which means that a true understanding of how an individual deals with a given stigma requires a proper exploration of: (a) the general
source of the stigma; (b) the direct source of the stigma for the specific target; and (c) the cause and justification for the stigma’s existence in the specific social system in question.

**Criminal Stigma**

Past participation in criminal activity is a stigma that Goffman terms “blemishes of individual character.” Blemishes of individual character are highly potent forms of stigma because they imply a constant risk of danger. In 1958, Fritz Heider became the first person to write about attribution theory in his book *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* (Heider 1958; Stephan 1973). Heider presented his general problem of attribution, which is how people explain behavior and how these explanations of behavior shape the individual’s response to the behavior. Heider presented the analogy of the ordinary person being a naïve scientist that is attempting to stabilize and simplify the environment that he or she is studying so that behavior can be comprehended, predicted, and controlled. People see all actions dispositionally and that is what makes them controllable and understandable. The dispositions that are the most relevant to the ordinary person are those that cause events to occur. Heider (1958) argues that it is not the event itself but the perceived cause of it that is the reality to which a person reacts. Thus, interpersonal relations depend, in large part, on each person’s perceptions of the other’s behavior (Heider 1958). Heider’s analysis demonstrates the process of stigmatizing actions of ex-offenders.

In 1965, Edward Jones and Keith Davis put forth their correspondent inference theory in a paper for *Advanced Experiments in Social Psychology*. The central concern of this theory is how an observer of an action makes inferences about the disposition of the
actor. Jones and Davis argue that first and foremost the observer must decide whether the behavior is caused by the actor or by the particular setting in which the actor finds himself. The rationale is that only intentional behavior is relevant to making judgments about a person. Intention is determined by factors such as behavioral freedom, ability to foresee negative consequences, and ability to achieve desired goals (Jones and Davis 1965). Secondly, the observer seeks to infer the actor’s particular intentions and then uses these perceived intentions to form thoughts on the actor’s particular dispositions. The dependent variable in this theory is correspondence of inference, which refers to when a disposition is directly reflected in the behavior of an actor and is unusual in strength and intensity (Jones and Davis 1965). Blemishes of individual character are especially difficult to overcome because perceivers use the stigma to justify hierarchy and confirm any negative dispositions that they perceive in targets.

Literature specific to persons in prison and exiting prison illustrates that this attribution process is highly relevant to ex-offenders (Brazemore and Erbe 2004; Burnett 2004; Erikson 1961; Farrall 2004; Goffman 1963; Hawkins 1981; Lee and Craft 2002; Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel 2004; Maruna 2001; Orcutt 1976; Petersilia 2003; Reiman 2005; Richards and Jones 2004; Uggen, Manza and Behrens 2004). Despite evidence indicating that some level of criminal activity is normal over the life-course, there is a distinction made in most social systems, America being one of them, between criminals and non-criminals (Moffitt 1993; Sampson and Laub 1993). Attribution theory would indicate that this distinction has to do with the attribution of guilt and a lack of responsibility. In other words, “criminals” are persons that choose to commit crime because they possess flawed judgement (Brazemore and Erbe 2004; Erikson 1961; Farrall
2004; Hawkins 1981; Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel 2004; Maruna 2001; Orcutt 1976; Reiman 2005; Uggen, Manza and Behrens 2004). People exiting prison face the detrimental status of having their stigma officially placed upon them by the recognized labeling agent, the state. A great deal of effort goes into this official declaration of stigma, but only limited attempts are made to reduce this stigma upon reentry at the individual, or state, level (Reiman 2005; Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel 2004; Brazemore and Erbe 2004; Farrall 2004; Petersilia 2003; Richards and Jones 2004; Uggen, Manza and Behrens 2004; Lee and Craft 2002; Erikson 1961).

**The Impact of Stigma**

It is important to note how stigma impacts individuals exiting prison. There are two ways of considering the question of how stigma impacts a target. First, in what ways does stigma affect the actions of individual perceivers and the general perceiving societies? Does targeting and stigmatizing others limit the abilities of those others? Second, in what ways does stigma affect the way that the individual conceives of herself? If stigma, or the fear of being stigmatized, impacts a target’s actions and identity then it does not even matter whether the stigma exists in the way that a target thinks that it might. What matters is that stigma is perceived to exist.

Stigma has a serious impact on ex-offenders because stigma limits opportunities made available to targets. Pager (2009) argues that the crime reduction strategies of federal and state governments, specifically increased imprisonment leading to two million persons behind bars, have turned ex-offenders into a significant stigmatized
underclass. Pager uses survey research to demonstrate that ex-offender status is causally linked to substance addiction, job and relationship failure, and criminal recidivism. This is linked to individual agency but also to structural disadvantage and legal discrimination designated by the mark of a criminal record. Inequality related to incarceration has been reaffirmed by Bruce Western in his work on mass incarceration’s effects on the large ex-offender population. Work by Farrall (2004), Petersilia (2003), and Pager (2003) demonstrate the same basic problems and link them to state and societal stigma which limits opportunities to ex-offenders, making it more difficult for them to succeed.

My research assumes that policy geared towards cultivating human capital and social development fails to reach its full potential in a system that does not additionally focus on prisoners reconceptualizing themselves and the prison system as well as a public reconceptualization of criminals. While numerous causes of deviance can be argued, what is most important in this research is what happens to offenders after exiting prison. Impaired social development and loss of human capital independently hinder the chance for success, but the impact is heightened when stigma is added to them. In addition, stigma has an independent impact on the chances of recidivism (Bushway et al. 2004; Cioffi 2003; Farrall 2004; Fife and Wright 2000; Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999; Jussim et al. 2003; Link and Strueng 1997; Maruna 2001; Western 2009; Western 2005). This line of thought indicates that government initiatives to reduce recidivism, as currently conceived, are incomplete (Erikson 1961; Jussim et al. 2003; Link et al. 1989; Maruna 2001; Reiman 1995; Richards and Jones 2004; Uggen 2004; Petersilia 2003). The primary focus of corrections is on elements such as job training, life skills training, and
programs geared towards social development and increasing human capital. At the same time, these programs ignore relational stigmas that are difficult to overcome (Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; Reiman 1995; Richards and Jones 2004; Uggen et. al 2004).

While ex-offenders’ high recidivism rates are a reality, the expanding prison population has made reentry and recidivism a more important topic for prison officials (Bushway et. al 2004; Farrall 2004). Inside prison walls, the majority of programs focus on understanding harm from crimes and job training for prisoners, but there is relatively little discussion concerning social structure, inequality, and government bias as causes of and impediments to disproportionate criminal behavior, punishment, and recidivism; this is not a surprising fact (Bouffard and Laub 2004; Brazemore and Erbe 2004). The implication of this model for prison programming is that successful stigma management is the most under-developed part of reentry planning.

In response to the second major question, stigma impacts the individual’s identity and actions. The basis of the labeling perspective is that individuals labeled as deviant have opportunities limited to them and begin to internalize and eventually adopt these labels (Lemert 1951; Markowitz 2001). Prior work has demonstrated that individuals who manage to deflect or redefine deviant labels have a much higher chance of succeeding when exiting prison (Maruna 2001; Matsueda 1992; Uggen 2004).

Stigma affects the actions of individuals being stigmatized by causing them to constantly consider how others will view them. Cooley (1902) argued that we often look at ourselves through the eyes of others and act based on those interpretations. This
concept, known as the “Looking Glass Self,” was modified to argue that we look at ourselves the way that we believe society views us (Cioffi 2003; Cooley 1902; Mead 1934). This distinction is important because the target of stigma needs only to be affected by ideas about how persons might view her (Cioffi 2003).

As previously discussed, research on the stigma faced by ex-offenders in the United States is highly limited. There is a body of literature showing that individuals’ perceptions of what others think of them are important to success. Maruna (2001), whose work will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter, argues that the perceptions of others dramatically affects the way that ex-offenders manage their own identity. Ex-offenders who perceive that others feel that they will commit more crime see less incentive to avoid participation in crime, while those who perceive that others believe in them are less likely to commit future crime (Farrall 2004; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; Maruna 2001; Matsueda 1992; Piquero 2004). Other work has found support for the symbolic interactionist perspective arguing that positive self-identity, spurred by cognitive transformations, contributes to the likelihood of desistance from criminal activity (Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph 2002; Matsueda 1992; Sampson and Laub 1990).

In a general sense, there are a number of ways that stigma contributes to problems for individuals attempting to change their status. Stigma contributes to difficulty in interactions with others. Ex-offenders, as labeled, are perceived as threats. Targets that possess blemishes of individual character are viewed as unreliable and untrustworthy and therefore always a potential threat (Goffman 1961). This stigma is not consistent across
all potential perceivers, but ex-offenders are consistently aware of the fact that others might perceive them as a threat (Crandall 2003; Goffman 1961; Richards and Jones 2004; Stangor and Crandall 2003). This contributes to problematic interactions between stigmatized and non-stigmatized individuals, leading to frustration, isolation, and even violence (Blascovich et al. 2003; Hebl, Tickle and Heatherton 2003; Smart and Wegner 2003; Strangor and Crandall 2003). Additional consequences include rejection (Fife and Wright 2000; Markowitz 2001), self deprecation and internalization of stigma (Wright, Gronofein and Owens 2000) and complete societal withdrawal (Link, Mirotznik and Cullen 1991; Link and Struenig 1997). Individuals with a highly stigmatized status often have trouble finding help from others of the same status because the stigma is so entrenched in society that even those who possess the stigma will stigmatize others like them (Gerstel 1987). All of these impacts affect identity work by ex-offenders because they challenge a target’s mastery over his own identity (Link, Mirotznik and Cullen 1991).

**How Perceivers Justify Stigma:**

It is arguable in any system that stigmatizable characteristics are assumed to be worthy of action by the state or individuals. For example, a mentally handicapped individual’s special needs can and should be taken into account when visiting public places and an individual that has committed multiple violent offenses should be responded to in some form by the state; the state has an interest in controlling and responding to stigma (Blascovich et al. 2003; Hebl, Tickle and Heatherton 2003; Smart and Wegner 2003; Strangor and Crandall 2003). Stigma creates and maintains hierarchy,
dehumanizes targets, and, in ways discussed in the prior sections of this chapter, can encourage the same behavior and qualities being stigmatized. While stigmatizing as a process may be a consistently reoccurring characteristic of nations, cultures, and small social systems, it is a counter-intuitive process because by stigmatizing, perceivers increase the likelihood of stigmatizable behavior. This problem can be explained in two ways: either (1) humans do not spend enough time critically evaluating the role that stigmatizing plays in perpetuating those stigmas; or (2) there is a benefit to stigmatization that goes beyond the perceived motivation for stigma, that being to reduce stigma.

One way of understanding why we stigmatize is to evaluate the justifications we use for stigmatizing. Research on stigma points to ideologies, or frames, that guide the process of stigmatizing groups and individuals. Crandall (2003) discusses justification ideologies:

How is it that people can so cavalierly apply a lower moral standard for their conduct toward the stigmatized? A variety of ‘justification ideologies’ let people feel that discriminatory treatment is natural, sensible, and fair. A justification ideology is a set of (1) beliefs and values about how the world works, and (2) moral standards that serve to create levels of moral value.

A justification ideology is like a secular religion: It is a set of assumptions and background beliefs that are untested and untestable. Such ideologies are beyond the touch of data and experience; they are the very frames and lenses through which we view the world. They are described as ‘ideologies’ because they are often not open to dispassionate discussion and not based on careful reflection and sifting of evidence by the people that embrace them (p. 127).

Exploring justifications for stigma is important because stigma is a constructed idea, and constructed ideas need to be actively maintained (Crandall 2003; Crandall et al. 1999;
Justifications, as described, are easily followed and understood (not unlike academic descriptions of propaganda) and are adamantly defended (Schutte 1995).

Justifications, in a symbolic interactionist framework are understood in terms of perspectives. Belonging to and mediated by social interaction, perspectives are used as guides to how an object (broadly understood in symbolic interactionism) is defined. Shibutani (1955) argues that perspectives are the results of reference groups. A reference group is the social system whose perspective the individual uses. In the context of criminality and how different groups define an image such as ex-offenders, it is likely that those that define the group positively and negatively, or in a stigmatizing or non-stigmatizing way, will be using entirely different reference groups to inform their definitions of the symbol. Mead (1934) argues that perspectives make us selective in the way that we define and respond to symbols/characteristics. For Mead, the mind is pragmatic. In this respect, it could be argued that one definition of ex-offenders might be selectively excluding ideas that are not excluded by another. This pragmatic component of the mind dictates what perspective we have on what is worthy of stigma (Charon 2001; Goffman 1986; Mead 1934). What follows is a discussion of three major justification ideologies/perspectives that frame our current understanding of ex-offenders’ experiences in the United States. The section concludes by integrating Michel Foucault’s postructuralism into the discussion of stigma production.
Attribution Approaches/the “Just World” Perspective:

Attributional approaches are concerned with how people form causal explanations. The process of attribution begins with social perception, progresses through causal judgment and social inference, and concludes with behavioral consequences (Crandall 2003; Crittendon 1983). Attributions, in the context of criminal stigma, serve the purpose of making the stigmatized accountable for their own circumstances. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the more the target can be held accountable for the cause of his stigma, the more justified the perceiver can feel about the stigma being applied.

In the American context, the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) represents a dominant controlling force in the evaluation of stigma in the United States (Parson 1937). The basis of the protestant work ethic is that hard work is the only precondition to success. In addition, hard work is meaningful in and of itself, therefore persons who do not succeed can and should be held accountable, almost exclusively accountable, for their own failures (Crandall 2003; Lerner 1980; Parsons 1937). Katz and Hass (1988) identify a general contempt for pleasure and self-gratification (characteristics associated with criminal actions) along with the appreciation of desire as primary defining characteristics of PWE. A third characteristic is the causal link between hard work and success. A basis of the Protestant work ethic is that persons who work hard will receive rewards for their hard work. Therefore, people who fail, do so because they do not work hard. This means that persons with a higher belief in PWE are more likely to be comfortable stigmatizing ex-offenders (Crandall 1994; Crandall 2003; Katz and Hass 1988; Kinder and Sears 1981; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Lerner 1980; McConahey and Hough 1976).
Lerner (1980) argues that the belief in “a just world” is a common and effective justification ideology, similar to the Protestant Work Ethic. For hard work to absolutely lead to success, we must live in a world that is overwhelmingly just (Crandall 2003; Lerner 1980; Reiman 2005). Such an existence can not be proven, but the belief in the existence of a just society can be important to the development of stigma. If a perceiver believes that the social system in which she lives is a system where people get what they deserve, then stigmas are not only seen as acceptable, but deserved (Herbert and Dunkel-Schetter 1992; Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1992).

At the point that we attribute control and responsibility for actions we have justified labeling and stigma because the target has brought the stigma upon herself. Believing that stigma is deserved allows perceiving nations, groups or individuals to act in disgust against its target. The target deserves the anger because he has engaged in stigmatizable action despite possessing control and responsibility over his actions (Crandall 2003; Weiner, Perry and Magnusson 1988). Stigma and the impact of stigma has a relationship with the attributed cause of the stigma. The more fault that is attributed to lack of control and responsibility for a target, the more severe the stigma and its impact. Coupled with this desire to fault groups of individuals for their own status is the rejection of state or group-based solutions to the problems (Crandall 1994; DeJong 1994; Keltner, Ellsworth and Edwards 1993; Vescio 1995; Weiner 1986). This manifests itself in a number of damaging ways, one being “victim blaming” where the stigmatized individuals are seen as responsible for their own problems, and, therefore, as having only themselves to look to for the solution (Crandall 2003; Glazer 1998; Ryan 1971). Stigma
allows the state and the perceivers to excuse their own prejudice, clearing a path for future prejudice.

Hierarchal Approaches

Hierarchal justification ideologies more actively embrace inequality. Crandall (2003) argues that hierarchal justifications of poor treatment of the stigmatized are “based on the perception of the goodness, naturalness, or necessity of social hierarchies. Various theories suggest that people perceive and value hierarchies among groups of people. This ‘natural’ hierarchy in turn justifies differential treatment of occupants in the hierarchy (p. 133).” Hierarchal frames for understanding and accepting the treatment of the stigmatized place inequality and poor treatment in the realm of the unavoidable. If we define inequality as a natural and unavoidable byproduct of human existence, then stigma becomes not only acceptable, but a right (Crandall 2003; Hawkins 1977; Hofstader 1955). What follows is a brief discussion of the two common and relevant social hierarchy frames: Social Darwinism and Social Dominance.

Social Darwinism is based on the assumption that biological concepts, such as those grounded in Darwin’s theories of evolution, can be applied to and help explain current social problems (Crandall 2003; Spencer 1872). Hawkins (1997) explains that social Darwinism:

is characterized by five beliefs: (1) All of nature, including humans, is governed by natural biological laws; (2) population and habitat pressure leads to a struggle for existence; (3) physical and intellectual traits that provide a selective advantage will succeed, persist, and spread; (4) genetic inheritance and natural selection produce new species and eliminate others; and (5) all of the preceding arguments apply equally well to human social behavior and social structure (cited in Crandall 2003 p. 133).
For the purpose of my research the fifth characteristic is the most important, although all five can be considered problems for ex-offenders. The concept that there are those who are criminal and those who are not is an important component of the American criminal justice system narrative (Erikson 1961; Maruna 2004; Reiman 1995). But, the response to criminality by the state can certainly be seen through the perspective of modern social darwinism (Reiman 2005; Vold, Bernard and Snipes 2001). Specifically, the idea that criminality is a developed and stigmatizable trait that cannot be fixed is the foundation upon which stigmatizing ex-offenders can best be justified (Brazemore and Erbe 2004; Erikson 1961; Foucaut 1967; Maruna et al. 2004; Pager 2009; Pager 2003; Reiman 2005; Richards and Jones 2004; Uggen et al. 2004; Western 2007).

Social Dominance orientations are based on the frequency with which persons and groups adopt frames that place their own in-group in a superior position to out-groups. The Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is important because even if your in-group is not the group which is acknowledged as superior in the specific society being discussed, the degree to which a person or group adopts a SDO correlates with generalized comfort with an unequal system (Crandall 2003; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth and Malle 1994; Sidanius and Pratto 1993). What makes this general comfort with inequality important is that inequality becomes the building block for social structure in the United States in systems such as education, income, and punishment (Berreman 1981; Crandall 2003).
Ex-Offenders and the Punitive/Rehabilitative Discourse

Ex-offenders are in a unique stigma position in the United States. In the case of the most serious stigmas in the twenty-first century, the state is supposed to serve as a protector for targets. While racism, sexism, and discrimination on the basis of numerous other stigmatizable qualities such as class, physical deformities, and sexual orientation are deep seeded and at least arguably structurally encouraged, the state acknowledges or accepts some affirmative obligation to protect these groups. Government initiatives such as the Equal Pay and Civil Rights Acts, while problematic in enforcement, represent a frame embraced by the state and population that targets deserve at least some protection against the practice of perceivers. In the case of criminals, most of whom become ex-offenders, the state is a perceiver and therefore shapes and frames the nature of stigmas for targets at every phase of the criminal justice system. As the title of Devah Pager’s groundbreaking article notes, upon reentering society offenders must deal with the “mark of a criminal record (2003).”

Foucault is most famous for his critical analysis of social institutions such as psychiatry, medicine, penology, and criminology, as well as his groundbreaking work on the history of human sexuality. Throughout his career, Foucault was concerned with power, which for him is the ability to get persons to do things without force. Power involves, necessarily, the ability to alter or prevent the will of another person. According to Foucault, one’s will can be changed through the production and control of knowledge through discourse (Foucault 1977; Foucault 1976; Foucault 1966). For Foucault, there is no meaning or truth that exists ahistorically, so all truths must be considered in context;
stigma, thus, must be considered in context. In this regard, Foucault’s treatment of stigma is not entirely different from Goffman’s (Foucault 1977; Goffman 1961). However, while Goffman’s intent is to explain stigma as existing as a constructed byproduct of relationships, he neglects to consider how power is part of the construction of stigma (Goffman 1961). Adding the element of power allows us to consider questions Goffman’s original analysis did not. These considerations include the relative difficulty in freeing one’s self from certain stigmas, the benefits that can be drawn from labeling targets, and the proper ways to escape from power in a highly controlled society.

The middle phase of Foucault’s academic life was dedicated to a unit of analysis that he termed “discourse.” A discourse is a system of thought in which certain knowledge is possible and things can be determined to be true and false (Foucault 1975). For example, sociology as an academic discourse tells us what is true and false about the ways that societies function while the discipline of biology tells us what is true and false about our knowledge of the human body. While we attribute a great deal of truth to these disciplines they are still simply well constructed frames, perspectives and ideas about what we should think as opposed to ahistorically true ideas about the world. The same way that stigmas are social ideas and require maintenance, discourses are subject to power and therefore reflect power relations in a society.

Criminology, criminal justice, and penology are discourses that dictate truth about persons that we label as criminal and that we send to prison. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1976) traces the history of the penal system from one that focused on private trials and public executions to the modern prison system which focuses on highly visible
sentencing but private punishment and monitoring. This transition represents, for
Foucault, a transition from the punishment of the body to the punishment of the soul.

Another way of discussing this transition is to say that the way we discuss people who
commit crime has changed and the discourses that have controlled those discussions has
changed. Modern criminals are flawed individuals that we can correct and keep under
careful surveillance (Foucault 1966; Foucault 1975; Foucault 1976).

Consistent with Foucault’s ideas concerning discourses, a review of the literature
indicates a general discourse surrounding the current U.S. system of punishment which
will be referred to as the Punitive/Rehabilitative Discourse (PRD). The PRD possesses
four main components. First, the argument that our society is a contract government;
therefore the “deviant” becomes a participant in his own punishment because he has
violated tenants that he has agreed to by being a citizen. Basically, we tend to argue that
as a society we have a system of rules that everyone agrees needs to exist. When a person
violates a rule and is called on to account for that rule violation we can argue that the
person has brought the punishment upon himself.

Second, state structure and action is always well-intentioned and can never be
considered relevant to the problems of offenders, because individual accountability is
most important. Although the state is one perceiver of prisoners and ex-offenders (for
good or bad), they escape the title of perceiver because of the generally held belief that
the state is benevolent. The truth of this component is irrelevant. What makes the
assumption that the state is benevolent a problem is that when ex-offenders find
themselves in opposition to the state, it becomes more difficult to manage their stigma.
Third, the ultimate reward in a free society is liberty; prison takes away individual liberty and is therefore the correct form of punishment. This component of PRD takes on an incapacitation solution to a deterrence mindset. Taking away liberty is seen as the only logically consistent means of preventing future crimes from occurring. Reiman (2005) points out that this mindset serves to justify a highly stigmatizing system, which in practice, can be counterproductive.

Fourth, most people respect the law; those that do not should be punished. Discourse dictating that there are those who are criminals and those that are not, justifies and maintains a group of deviant individuals. In a criminal context, a person that has been criminally sanctioned is labeled as deviant. Erikson (1961) discusses the formal labeling of deviance:

The deviant is a person whose activities have moved outside the margins of the group, and when the community calls him to account for that vagrancy it is making a statement about the nature and placement of its boundaries. It is declaring how much variability and diversity can be tolerated within the group before it begins to lose its distinctive shape, its unique identity (p.13).

In other words, the difference identified for the person possessing a criminal stigma is that she lacks respect for the boundaries of society, that she is a dangerous threat. This difference allows perceivers, public and private, to deny ex-offenders respect, opportunities, and basic civic rights (Bazemore 1998; Uggen et al. 2004; Pager 2009; Pager 2003; Western 2007; Western 2005; ). Expanding prison populations, exceeding two million people, have turned ex-offenders into a significant stigmatized underclass in the United States (Pager 2003; Petersilia 2003). Erikson (1961) argued that formally labeling persons as deviant serves the function of establishing boundaries for society. To
that end, he argues that it is possible to consider that prisons and the criminal justice system are designed to fail. To support this assertion, Erikson notes the large and dramatic courtroom ceremonies, intended to declare that someone is a criminal and worthy of stigma. When exiting prison, there is no equivalent ceremonial process designed to relabel the prisoner as a contributing member of society. This makes the prior deviant label difficult to escape.

For Foucault, the prison system maintains power by giving elites the ability and authority to control the souls of individuals by maintaining physical control of the body. The purpose of prison is to dehumanize and stigmatize. Therefore, stigma, as a cause of criminality, is natural and intended (Foucault 1977). This particular function of prison is far out of the scope of my data and explanatory ability, and thus is untestable here. However, the arguments concerning how discourse has changed explore the role that the prisoner faces when exiting prison, as an examined and marked individual. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault cites Bigot Preameneu:

The feeling of injustice that a prisoner has is one of the causes that may make his character untamable. When he sees himself exposed in this way to suffering, which the law has neither ordered no envisaged, he becomes habitually angry against everything around him; he sees every agent of authority as an executioner; he no longer thinks that he was guilty: he accuses justice itself (1977 p. 266).

Neo-marxists argue that one major purpose of the prison system is to maintain a stigmatized underclass in society that keeps in power an elitist upper class (Reiman 1995). These researchers point to the tendency for the criminal justice system to continue its focus on punitive approaches despite consistent failures with this approach (Reiman 1995; Uggen 2004). While it is not within the scope of this research to support or deny
this critical line of thought, it seems that at the very least this perspective elucidates the comfort society has in stigmatizing ex-offenders and the lack of urgency in avoiding this stigma.

The point of the above section is to illustrate a discourse of criminality that impacts the way that persons exiting prison can identify and understand themselves. While literature is available and scholars have debated the validity of conflict and other neo-marxist approaches to the criminal justice system, this is not the intent of my research. I am not concerned with whether or not the current criminal justice system (a) intends to create and enforce a stigmatized class, and (b) has created appropriate and proper discourses. I believe that a careful consideration of the construction of criminal discourse and a review of empirical and theoretical works make a few important conclusions clear. First, there is a discourse present in America which places ex-offenders as irresponsible enough to be stigmatized, but assumes them to be responsible enough to correct their behavior on their own, a focus on personal accountability. Second, this discourse, whether intentional or not, places ex-offenders at an extreme disadvantage. Since ex-offenders are monitored and labeled as threatening not only by the general public, but also by the state, targeted ex-offenders often lack the ability to find support groups with a chance for success. Third, the state and other perceivers have limited to no reasons to evacuate or to reduce their role in the process of stigmatization because it excuses them from accountability. Even if there is no intentionality, PRD can be seen as an active construction of knowledge created from historical inertia (Foucault 1977; Reiman 2005).
STIGMA MANAGEMENT

Goffman and General Stigma Management Theory

There is a not a large body of literature on stigma management as a process for ex-offenders. Stigma is difficult to research and yields little reward because it is difficult to evaluate empirically; thus a barrier exists to creating solid research on this important issue. Stigma work is very difficult to do with survey methods and various other quantitative techniques (although Matsueda has done exceptional work that approaches stigma issues). Stigma management is a complex process because it changes over time and it is not always something that an individual is fully aware that she is doing. This makes it very difficult to study stigma management without a combination of interview and observation. In addition, the reward for such expensive and time consuming research can be small, especially for policy makers. Outstanding research on identity work by ex-offenders does not easily translate into policy suggestions or generalizable theory. That said, understanding stigma management, especially in response to powerful labeling agents, can provide insight into both the causes of and solutions to, an important social issue.

Goffman’s work on stigma management distinguishes between three forms of identity that an individual possesses: social, personal and ego. Goffman (1961) quickly summarizes:

The concept of social identity allowed us to consider stigmatization. The concept of personal identity allowed us to consider the role of information control in stigma management. The idea of ego identity allows us to consider what the individual may feel about stigma and its management, and leads us to give special attention to the advice he is given regarding these matters (p. 106).
While social identity is central to the understanding of stigma, my specific research question focuses on the interaction between personal and ego identity. Specifically, I am interested in how people manage stigma that they perceive is being placed upon them, information control, and identity management. In addition, how is it that alignments and collectives that individuals join are used to create a certain self-concept?

Personal identity is the form of identity that can be managed. The control of information is an important part of identity maintenance because ex-offenders are *discreditable* individuals (in most instances), they may attempt to manage and control information. Goffman expands on personal identity:

By personal identity, I have in mind only the first two ideas- positive marks of identity pegs, and the unique combination of life history items that come to be attached to the individual with the help of those pegs for his identity. Personal identity, then, has to do with the assumption that the individual can be differentiated from all others and that around this means of differentiation from all others and that around this means of differentiation a single continuous record of social facts can be attached, entangled, like candy floss, become then the sticky substance to which still other biographical facts can be attached. What is difficult to appreciate is that personal identity can and does play a structured, routine, standardized role in social organization just because of its one-of-a-kind quality (1961 p. 57).

Personal identity is about the regulation, and maintenance of social information. Goffman points out that people who are discredited, meaning their stigmatizable traits are always known, spend their lives focused on the management of tension related to their stigma. Persons that are discreditable, meaning that the target could have some control over the knowledge or her stigmatizable traits, spend the majority of their lives focused on the management of information about their stigma. Discreditable individuals have some control over what they disclose, and how the information that is disclosed is presented (Goffman 1961, Goffman 1959). Ex-offenders find themselves in an interesting situation
in that criminality is not physically or immediately apparent in the first interaction. However, the stigmatizing label is legally sanctioned and maintained, and surveillance is a daily part of the American ex-offender’s life. While an ex-offender does not have to disclose information about his criminal past, he can face legal sanctions for failing to do so (Richards and Jones 2004; Uggen, Manza and Behrens 2004; Taxman, Young and Byrne 2004). This means that ex-offenders deal both in tension and information management.

In the management of their personal identities, which is how they are viewed in relation to their stigmatizable trait, I would like to briefly discuss some popular techniques of information control. These techniques all relate to how a stigmatized person manages her own biography. For Goffman, biographies are managed and maintained in multiple contexts. The biography of a stigmatized person may be different in different social contexts based on the information that has been disclosed up to that point. Because Citizen Prisoner Alliance (CPA), the group that my research considers, is a coalition of ex-offenders and what CPA calls Free Worlders (people that have never been in prison), it provides an excellent setting for exploring what sort of techniques are used by ex-offenders to manage personal and social identities. The first technique, symbolic performance, involves selectively making visible certain parts of identity that can be used to shape the way that stigma (or the attempt to conceal stigma) is interpreted by others. This can include outright attempts to conceal identity or stay out of the eye of individuals that would attempt to identify the target as an ex-offender. Literature indicates that attempts to do this typically lead to poor self-esteem and problematic self-narratives (Link, Mirotznik and Cullen 1991; Link and Struenig 1997; Wright, Gronofein and
Owens 2000). Symbolic performance can involve the presentation of symbols that create a disruption in the normal interpretation of stigma. The offender could use disidentifiers which are designed to break up a normally coherent stigma picture. For example, ex-offenders are seen as dangerous, impulsive and lowly. A disidentifier could be heightened education or a great dedication to religion.

Of central importance, for Goffman, in information control is the decision to “pass” or “disclose.” Passing involves participation in public life with biographical others that are unaware of the stigma of the person with whom they are interacting. While this can be advantageous to ex-offenders and is often the preferred method of interaction (Uggen Manza and Behrens 2003), there is a risk. Goffman notes “when an individual in effect or by intent passes, it is possible for a discrediting to occur because of what becomes apparent about him, apparent even to those who socially identify solely on the basis of what is available to any stranger in the social situation (1963 p. 75).” The problem ex-offenders face with passing is that in the United States, ex-offender status is relevant for biographical others in almost any long-term social relationship. Therefore, any decision to pass may eventually be met with stigma or some other form of isolation. Disclosure involves revealing the stigmatizable characteristic to biographical others in some form. Disclosure may be complete and exhaustive relying on perceiver(s) to decide the next action. Disclosure can also take a more moderate form which Goffman refers to as covering. Covering is when disclosure is made but the stigmatizable trait is then concealed as much as possible so as to make others comfortable. In the case of ex-offenders, it might be important for someone that has been in prison to disclose such a fact but then to not mention it again. Goffman’s ideas about stigma management present
a framework to understand the management of personal identity for ex-offenders, a group that has not been considered using Goffman’s analysis.

As personal identity is what the target knows about herself, ego identity more closely aligns with what she knows and decides about herself. Ego identity “‘ego’ or ‘felt’ identity, namely, the subjective sense of her own situation and her own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of her various social experiences (1961 p. 105).” Ego identity is how you understand and define yourself, based on perspectives that have been developed by the target in interactions with others.

Goffman notes that it is common for the stigmatized individual to feel a certain ambivalence about her role in society since she is asked to use certain standards for how individuals behave even though she does not herself have the ability to completely conform to those standards (Goffman 1963; Goffman 1986). This means that nearly all stigmatized individuals will fall somewhere on a continuum between absolute dedication to, and defense of, her own stigmatizable status and complete self-loathing submission to dominant standards of thought (Goffman 1959; Goffman 1963). Goffman notes “It has been suggested that the stigmatized individual defines himself as no different from any other human being, while at the same time he and those around him define him as someone set apart (1963 p. 108-9).” This means that stigmatized individuals, in defining themselves, must find some middle ground.

The first area where a middle ground must be reached is in the tension between minstrelization and normalization. Minstrelization, “whereby the stigmatized person ingratiatingly acts out before normals the full dance of bad qualities imputed to his kind, thereby consolidating a life situation into a clownish role (Goffman 1963, p. 110).” The
benefits that can be obtained from fully playing up a stigma are represented in the literature but are perceived to have long-term negative consequences for identity (Burnett 2004; Goffman 1963; Gramling and Forsythe 1987; Maruna 2004). This is presented in contrast to normalization, which is covering at its most extreme. Ex-offenders face powerful justification ideologies and are under consistent pressure to disclose and cover.

A second area, where a balance must be struck, is in the stigmatized person’s alignment to in-groups and out-groups. In-group alignment is the target’s alignment with persons sympathetic to her cause. A true in-group alignment represents disclosure in an aggressive form. Goffman notes, “as might be expected, professionals who take an in-group standpoint may advocate a militant and chauvinistic line—even to the extent of favoring a secessionist ideology. Taking this tack, stigmatized individuals in mixed contacts will give praise to the assumed special values and contributions of his kind (1963 p. 114).” Other work has explored how stigmatized groups champion their own contributions to society (Amen and Rosenbaum 2002; Ashforth and Kenner 1999; Dell-Amen and Rosenbaum 2002; Kinney 1993; Pitchford 2001; Reismann 2001) but warn that in its extreme form this has the potential to isolate the stigmatized, heighten group threat and limit mastery of identity (Dell-Amen and Rosenbaum 2002). Work on ex-offenders has also demonstrated the importance of positive, even aggressively positive advocacy (Maruna 2004). This will be discussed more in-depth in the next section. In-group alignment is contrasted with out-group alignment, a contrast that parallels minstrelization versus normalization. Out-group alignments often require targets to focus on reducing tension for normals, a process that is interesting but also conflicts with most research indicates ex-offenders must do to create a positive self-identity. Ex-offenders, as
previously discussed, face immense and often times overtly proscribed pressure to form out-group alignments (Brazemore and Erbe 2004; Burnett 2004; Erikson 1961; Farrall 2004; Goffman 1963; Hawkins 1981; Lee and Craft 2002; Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel 2004; Maruna 2001; Orcutt 1976; Petersilia 2003; Reiman 2005; Richards and Jones 2004; Uggen, Manza and Behrens 2004).

New Frontiers for Advancing Stigma Management

Shadd Maruna and Ex-Offender Identity Work

While there is only a limited amount of literature on stigma as a cause of recidivism for ex-offenders, the research on stigma management by ex-offenders borders on non-existence. The most important body of research detailing identity work done by ex-offenders was completed by Shadd Maruna (2001) and detailed in the award-winning book Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives. Maruna interviewed ex-offenders in Liverpool, England, in an attempt to understand what distinguished persons who desist from crime from persons who persist in committing crime. Most attempts to help ex-offenders rebuild their lives (punitive approaches in prison, various types of parole, rehabilitation, attempts at developing social capital) work in some way or another (Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; Maruna 2001; Toch 2002). Despite this assumption, a large percentage of individuals that interact with the prison system will interact with it again at some future point in their lives (Pager 2003; Pager 2009; Petersilia 2001; Western 2005; Western 2007). This led Maruna to focus on the differences between individuals who desist and those who do not.
In a theoretically abstract way, Maruna’s work represents a synthesis of Goffman’s ideas of stigma and stigma management and Foucault’s ideas about discourse and care for the self. Maruna (2001) explains;

Unlike active offenders, the long-time, persistent offender who tries to desist from crime has a lot to explain. The participants in the Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS) each spent around a decade selling drugs, stealing cars, and sitting in prisons. Most critically, they have made repeated breaks with the life of crime and drugs (often announcing their “reform” to authorities and significant others), only to return to offending behavior. No one (including the speaker himself or herself) is going to automatically believe such a person, when they announce, ‘I am a new person’ or ‘I have changed my ways.’ If such a transition is to be believed, the person needs a coherent narrative to explain and justify this turnaround…the present ‘good’ of the reformed ex-offender must also be explained somehow through biographical events (85).

Maruna is arguing that in order for ex-offenders to succeed in society they need to develop positive pro-social identities (2001). The ex-offender must negotiate how he understands himself and his own actions (care for the self and stigma management), but also negotiate how he is perceived in social interactions (stigma management).

Maruna’s research concludes that successful and unsuccessful ex-offenders (regardless of background, job skills, family) have very different ways of understanding their chances of success. Successful ex-offenders were likely to have reconceptualized their lives by using what Maruna terms “redemption scripts”. Maruna (2001) explains

The redemption script begins by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator- a victim of society who gets involved with crime and drugs to achieve some sort of power over otherwise bleak circumstances. This deviance eventually becomes its own trap, however, as the narrator becomes ensnared in the vicious cycle of crime and imprisonment. Yet, with the help of some outside force, someone who ‘believed in’ the ex-offender, the narrator is able to accomplish what he or she was ‘always meant to do.’ Newly empowered, he or she now also seeks to ‘give something back’ to society as a display of gratitude. This process might be characterized as ‘making good.’ Rather than ‘knifing off’ one’s troubled past, this redemption script allows the person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life.
Although the personal agency implied in the ‘knifing off’ concept remains, ‘making good’ involves more self-reconstruction than amputation (2001 p. 87).

Maruna is discussing the importance of identity work in distinguishing between those who succeed and fail, mostly motivated by the narratives used by ex-offenders to rationalize their place in society. For example, some successful criminals rationalize their actions as bad behavior committed by a good person. Another example of a redemption script is those offenders who indicate that their past bad behavior has taught them what they need to succeed (Maruna 2001; Maruna 2004). The basis of redemption scripts is the connection of the bad past to the creation of a positive present. Maruna argues that successful ex-offenders are able to separate the self negative past actions; they recover the good past self and insert it into the present (Biernacki 1986; Rotenberg 1987).

Those offenders who fail use “condemnation scripts” which focus on hopelessness for change (2001). Condemnation scripts are based on obstacles in society that prevent successful reentry. Maruna argues:

I characterize the narrative of persistent offenders as condemnation script. The condemned person in the story is the narrator (although he or she reserves plenty of condemnation and blame for society as well). Active offenders in this sample largely saw their life scripts as having been written for them a long time ago. In a description of ‘ontologies of the self,’ Hankiss (1981) called this a ‘self- absolutory’ narrative strategy, in which a negative present follows linearly from a negative past.

When asked to describe ‘some of the important turning points in your life,’ for instance, persisting interviewees often described only events that took place in childhood. One 25-year-old answered that the time he was sexually attacked as a small boy was his life’s turning point. As we had discussed this event earlier in the interview, I did not ask for further details, but rather asked, ‘any other turning points, important episodes since then?’ He responded, ‘Just that really, everything else was normal.’ Another 36-year-old responds that her father was her turning point. I asked what she meant by this, and she explained, ‘Just being treated the way I was by him and that.’

The turning points described by active offenders tended to take on the quality of life sentences for these narrators (2001 p. 75).
These scripts are essentially internal stigma management tools and demonstrate the deep psychological effect that stigma can have on success trajectories (Anderson et al. 1994; Heatherton et al. 2000;). In condemnation scripts, persons do not take pride in criminal behavior but revert back to criminality because: (a) it is seen as inevitable and unavoidable, or (b) it is seen as the most effective way to have control over one’s life (Maruna 2001). Maruna concludes that for many individuals, it is easier to revert to criminal activity than to attempt to go straight and cope with failure.

The research is powerful but has certain limitations that need to be addressed. My research extends Maruna’s work in a number of important ways. First, I consider stigma management scripts in America. While the case can be made that America and the United Kingdom have similarities, there are important differences in surveillance and labeling. A fundamental assumption of my research, and Maruna’s, is that discourses and ideas about criminality are culturally and chronologically specific. Thus, my American data are important to verify the generalizability of Maruna’s work. Second, Maruna does not fully consider the potential discord between personal scripts and scripts presented to the public. A project based exclusively on interviews has the potential to overlook the different relational dynamics that might exist between a target and different types of perceivers. What Maruna terms “redemption scripts” may exist only in the relational dynamics of those interviews. My research combines interview with observation, in an attempt to see stigma management and care of the self in multiple contexts. Third, Maruna considers ex-offenders only at the individual level and chooses not to explore the origins of these scripts and the use of collective efforts as stigma management partners.
(collective support) for ex-convicts attempting to create redemption scripts. While my research does not focus on social movement dynamics as a unit of analysis, I consider what individuals get from participation in collectives with certain dynamics. Finally, no research has considered the importance of ex-prisoners contesting the legitimacy of the current prison structure as a part of the stigma management process. Maruna’s “redemption script” thematically represent individuals that have embraced a punitive/rehabilitative discourse and have rationalized their own past actions in a manner that matches public discourse on criminality (Maruna 2001; Maruna 2004). In contrast, “condemnation scripts” place blame on others such as the state, or represent giving up on the part of the ex-offender. My research considers those who seem to embrace personal scripts that look like condemnation but have the effect of redemption (Anderson 1994; Heatherton et al. 2000; McIvor et al. 2004; Piquero 2004; Toch 1965; Uggen 2004).

Foucault and the Construction of the Self as a Complement to Goffman

In this section, I combine Goffman’s foundational work on stigma management with Foucault’s concepts in ethics to suggest a power-conscious form of stigma management. The third phase of Foucault’s work deals with the care of the self, something often referred to as his “ethics.” This phase of Foucault’s work, presented in the last years of his life stand as a response to accusations by critics such as Rorty who argued that Foucault’s ideas about truth and power give us no prescription or program to live by, but rather encourage nihilism in the face of constructed ideas of truth (O’Farrell 2005). It is at the very heart of Foucault’s “Fearless Speech” lectures on the ancient Greek practice of “parrhesia,” defined as frank speech, that Foucault discusses how an
individual can and seems to live in a system that regulates and controls his or her actions (2001). Foucault’s work relocates politics outside of traditional structures of government by focusing on the practice of “care of self” as political, as a contestation of power. Foucault argues that “Socratic parrhesia,” is a form of self-cultivation which serves as a form of personal fulfillment, as well as a perpetual political critique that remains personally effective in the face of shifting political discourses. *Parrhesia* has the capacity to recreate individual’s identity, as well as their norms, truths, and ways in which they relate to one another. It is important to note two things: first, *Parrhesia* can function as a form of stigma management and second, this form of stigma management goes beyond Goffman’s ideas regarding in-group alignments and militant chauvinism.

In his *Fearless Speech* lectures, Foucault defines the *parrhesiastes* (truth-teller) as one who puts himself or others at risk by engaging in openly critical and therefore courageous speech out of a personal sense of duty - one risks anything from rejection to death when engaging in this critical activity. Foucault traces three primary shifts in the conceptions of *parrhesia* throughout history. First, *parrhesia* was thought of as a type of rhetoric, such as persuasion, which the citizens held as a right to speak freely (Foucault 2001). Individuals participate in this form of parrhesia in their daily lives when they speak out in risky situations for the purpose of individual gain. In its second phase, *parrhesia* plays a role in traditional political settings; the political *parrhesiastes* comes into contact with the law and is courageous in directly challenging the will of the leader (Foucault 2001). While Foucault classifies this as a highly risky form of *parrhesia*, it is
rare because it only belongs to persons that possess some form of political power. In our modern American government, this would be performed by persons like senators and political pundits (Foucault 2001).

Foucault identifies a third type of *parrhesia* as having the potential to improve individuals and the community by establishing a permanent critical attitude towards, and care for, the ethical and moral status of one’s life (Foucault 2001). Foucault claims that this is not a matter of convincing someone to believe the truth of what is being said, of changing one’s mind, but rather of creating a shift in lifestyle, “one’s relation to others, and one’s relation to oneself” (2001 p. 106). Foucault refers to this practice as a “conversion.” It is appropriate to say that it is not simply belief and truth being negotiated, but rather that one’s ego identity is being molded through the participation in *parrhesia*. Thus, *parrhesia’s* function is not to criticize the general order and standard practices so as to create a better political institution so much as to affect stigma by shaping the individuals who make up and maintain part of this stigma discourse.

*Parrhesia* functions as the “care for oneself” through philosophizing, which is aimed at speaking truth in a way that will shape one’s life. This version of what Foucault calls Socratic *parrhesia* helps to articulate the positive potential that Foucault sees in critical practice. All forms of *parrhesia* share the characteristic that they are not, for Foucault, revealing a metaphysical or empirical truth, but the *parrhesiastes’* message has the impact of being true because the speaker holds it to be true, as a strong conviction, or as Foucault says, a coincidence between belief and truth (2001). This complements Goffman’s concepts of stigma management as belonging to relationships and stigma that is being overcome having no real meaning. Therefore, the emphasis is not on any final
conclusion or definitive answers that the parrhesiastes can offer, but rather on experiences and ethics that are cultivated through the practice of parrhesia. In other words, the benefits from parrhesia are those perceived to exist for the person putting them forth.

In discussing what parrhesia would look like in practice, I hope to elevate the explanations of Fearless Speech as a form of stigma management that complements Goffman’s understanding of the stigma management process. According to Foucault, unlike the classical political parrhesiastes who uses persuasion and rhetoric to impact an audience, parrhesia focuses on becoming actively engaged in the process of giving a self-account. This means, exploring one’s conceptualization of ideas such as courage, justice, and virtue. For my research, justice is an especially important concept for consideration. What this discussion creates is a scenario where one is led to reveal the nature of the relationship between his or her behavior and his or her propounded belief.

Foucault does not find that this type of parrhesia holds similarities to confession, as one being “honest” with oneself in divulging sins. Rather, in parrhesia there is a dedication to understanding and creating the self; parrhesia functions as a type of physical or regular checkup, to make sure that the mind is functioning as it should (Foucault 2001). Parrhesia draws attention to the disjunction between one’s rational discourse and the way that one lives in practice. Parrhesia reveals ignorance of this disjunction and thereby helps to correct and diagnose the problem while simultaneously modeling a path which creates a more meaningful commitment to one’s beliefs and to the continual development of those beliefs. Goffman’s model does not take into account, in part for lack of interest, how one actually evades stigmatizable behavior as opposed to
simply status. When discussing in-group alignment, Goffman indicates that avoidance or control of stigma is the goal of most or all targets (1961). Specifically, Foucault’s conception of *parrhesia* goes beyond this to argue that targets engaging in *parrhesia* are gaining control of stigma, reducing their own stigmatizable behavior, and potentially redrawing the lines on what could be considered stigmatizable behavior. This is the most that can be expected of a relatively powerless target in a system controlled by stigmatizing discourse (Foucault 1966; Foucault 2001).

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate the need for further work on stigma and stigma management of ex-offenders in twenty-first century America. My exploration of individual stigma management strategies, as they relate to a social movement collective, will extend our understanding of stigma and stigma management. My research contributes to the study of stigma and stigma management processes in three important ways. First, I consider the targeting and creation as well as the contestation and management of stigma for persons that are exiting prison, a group generally lacking attention in the area of stigma research. I have highlighted the importance of the specific stigma that is waged against ex-offenders. Ex-offenders face a great deal of difficulty in the reentry process because upon exiting prison they possess what Goffman terms a blemish of character. This stigma is powerful because it is a statement on the ex-offenders reasoning, character and morality. Because ex-offender status is not visible in plain sight, ex-offenders consistently manage their identity and have the ability to control information. In this chapter I have attempted to highlight important stigma justification ideologies such as the Protestant Work Ethic, Social Darwinism, and Punitive
Rehabilitative Discourse which affect the manner in which ex-offenders choose to manage and respond to their own stigmas.

Second, I attempt to contribute to symbolic interactionist perspectives on stigma by adding post-structuralist considerations of power. Foucault’s work on parrhesia and Maruna’s discussions of redemption and condemnation scripts provide an excellent foundation for understanding the ways that ex-offenders can use interactions with individuals and collectives to form successful stigma management scripts.

Third, I am working with a collective that provides an interesting opportunity for targets to form in-group and out-group alignments, engage in minstrelization and normalization, and speak freely in a controlled environment. CPA provides a context for ex-offenders to encounter potential perceivers, interact with others targets, and consider frames that are relevant to their lives.
Chapter 3:
Social Movements and Stigma Management:
The Interaction between Movement Frames and Personal Scripts

In this chapter, I explore social movements’ theory and literature with an emphasis on the social psychology of social movement participation. I provide a comprehensive exploration of social movements with a focus on how social movement processes and social movement participation aids and reciprocally works with stigma management processes for individuals. This research initiative moves forward with the assumption that some individuals exiting prison cannot adequately create their own stigma management scripts. Therefore, the decision to remain active in a social movement/political advocacy group may be grounded in the benefits that emerge from being part of such an organization.

My research examines the social psychological elements of social movement participation. Most importantly, this research examines ways in which the professed culture of social movements interact with the practiced culture of a social movement to create sustained benefits for movement participants. Organizational and social movement approaches to stigma have proven very helpful in some instances. Social movement membership can have advantages even beyond the stated frame of the organization.
Elements of movement participation and culture, such as conflict (Goldberg 2003; Shemov 2003), member-specific framing (Berbrier 2002; Ginwright 2002; Patillo-McCoy 1989; Reese 2003), diverse interactions (Bahr 1967; Maruna 2001) and contesting social norms (Hasso 2001; Klatch 2001; Pelak 2002; Reismann 2000), contribute to personal narratives for stigmatized or disempowered individuals to escape the social and structural impacts of stigma.

In this chapter, I will provide a general review of social movement literature and then focus specifically on how social psychological elements of movement participation, such as decisions to join, participation in group meetings, and participation in external movement events, contribute to individual stigma management scripts and counter mainstream stigma justification ideologies. The chapter will begin by highlighting what sociologists generally identify as three important components of social movement research: political opportunity, resource mobilization and framing processes. Additionally, a discussion of new social movements as a branch of social movement literature will highlight additional means available for the study of social movement processes. I then consider how various parts of social movement participation ranging from the decision to enter, intensity of participation, selection of activities within the movement, and the decision to exit impact individual stigma management frames used by members. Finally, this chapter explores how participation in movements, and the stigma management scripts developed within those movements, impact the ability of participants to desist from crime and form positive personal identities.
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THEORY

Social movement scholars are primarily concerned with how individuals and collectives concerned with changing or maintaining elements of structure or culture develop and implement plans. Over the past two decades, one finds that the structure of movements has been analyzed through one of three frameworks. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) explain that:

Increasingly one finds movement scholars from various countries and nominally representing different theoretical traditions emphasizing the importance of the same three broad sets of factors in analyzing the emergence and development of social movements/revolutions. These three factors are (1) the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement; (2) the forms of organization (informal as well as formal), available to insurgents; and (3) the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action. Or perhaps it will be easier to refer to these three factors by the conventional shorthand designations of political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes (p. 2).

Another important element of social movements and social movement participation is the quality of the objective the movement is trying to attain. In this section, new social movement theory will be developed as well to discuss the difference between tangible and symbolic social movement goals, and to highlight measures of success and failure for social movements.

Political Opportunity

Research questions based in political opportunity frameworks attempt to understand social movements and revolutions in terms of the limitations created and opportunities provided by the political contexts in which they exist. Tarrow (1989) defines political opportunity as "consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent—
dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics.” Political opportunity structures are the circumstances surrounding a political landscape. Political opportunity structures are malleable and can change over a short period such as a few days or a longer period such as decades. Demographics, along with the political culture, of the population at a given time all contribute to the creation of a structure from which social movements can benefit or suffer. Meyer (2004) highlights that political opportunity can be understood to affect the ability to successfully mobilize movement participants, the advancement of particular movement claims over other movement claims, the ability to form alliances with some groups over others, and the selection of certain movement claims over others. This focus on the relationship between the political process and collective action is a dominant frame used to study social movement outcomes, yet it is a relatively recent phenomenon in the literature (McAdam 1996). As such, there are a number of unresolved questions pertaining to political opportunity.

First, since political opportunity is based on the context in which social movements can actualize their goals, it is difficult to conceive of when political opportunity exists and when it does not. Gamson and Meyer (1992) note that the ambiguous nature of the term political opportunity risks becoming “an all-encompassing fudge factor for all the conditions and circumstances that form the context for collective action (p. 23).” This means that it is important to differentiate political opportunity from the existence of conditions that help to facilitate change. Therefore, many political opportunity theorists focus heavily on separating the existence and variation in political structure and the cultural climate of the time (Gamson and Meyer 1992; McAdam,
McArthey and Zald 1996; McAdam 1996; McAdam 1982). This is a delicate balance. Scholars such as McAdam (1996) argue that it is dangerous to consider how culture and structures such as the media impact political opportunity; it blurs the lines of analysis because nearly any inspiring or agitating action or symbol could be considered political opportunity. While I believe Gamson and Meyer’s (1992) concern about expanding the concept of political opportunity should be taken into careful consider, I argue that there should still be careful consideration of more abstract concepts of political opportunity.

A question that arises with the study of political opportunity is what elements of political opportunity are in most need of research attention. A number of social movement scholars have considered this question and four trends emerge in the literature. First, it is important to consider the openness or closure of official legal structures in the social system in which change is being attempted. Specifically, change is often geared toward legal and/or regulatory change in the political legal system (Brockett 1996; Kriese et al. 1992; McAdam 1996; Rucht 1996; Tarrow 1994). Second, literature supports studying the power of elites that support the status quo, placing themselves in opposition to certain movements (Brockett 1996; Kriese et al. 1992; McAdam 1996; Rucht 1996; Tarrow 1994). Third, we can study the number of elite allies for the social movement in question. The strength of the elites might also be an important consideration in evaluating the relative strength of one very powerful elite ally versus numerous elites with less power (Brockett 1996; Kriese et al. 1992; McAdam 1996; Rucht 1996; Tarrow 1994). Fourth and finally, research can consider the extent to which a state oppresses the individuals in its control. While mobilization of resources is possible in nearly any
system, some political systems are repressive enough to quash the attainment of movement goals (Brockett 1996; McAdam 1996; Porta 1995).

The third important question in researching political opportunity is what should be considered the dependent variable in assessing the strength of social movements. In the past, literature has focused primarily on two results of political opportunity: the timing of movement activity, and the results of movement activity (Costain 1992; Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; McAdam 1996; Rucht 1990). First, much study of social movements is based on how the fluctuation in political opportunities impacts the timing of movement openings (Eisinger 1973; McAdam 1996). A second type of analysis focuses on the parts of social movement that contribute to success or failure of highlighted movement goals (Goldstone 1991; McAdam 1996; Zdravomyslova 1996).

While these two considerations are relevant to my analysis of Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA), this research considers two additional aspects of political opportunity, as a dependent variable. First, movements should be considered temporally in relation to other forms of protest (Brockett 1991; McAdam 1996; McAdam 1995). McAdam argues:

There is a good reason to believe that the movements which help set a cycle in motion are subject to very different developmental dynamics than those which arise later in the cycle. ‘The first category consists of those rare, but exceedingly important, 

*initiator movements* that signal or otherwise set in motion an identifiable protest cycle…..The second and more ‘populous’ category of *spin-off movements* that, in varying degrees, draw their impetus and inspiration from the original initiator movement (McAdam 1995 cited in McAdam 1996).

One view of social movements considers that some movements, rely far less on political opportunity but arise mostly in random circumstances. These movements are important because they become initiators for other larger movements. This research considers CPA
as both an initiator and secondary movement. Additionally, this research considers social movements as initiators of political opportunity, an accepted idea not highly represented in the current literature (Gamson and Meyer 1992). Past research has pointed to the importance that social movements can have in the creation of political opportunity (Costain 1992; Freeman 1973; McAdam 1996; Porta 1995). This paper considers CPA as both the result of and initiator of political opportunity.

**Resource Mobilization Theory**

Resource Mobilization, also known as mobilizing structures, refers to the formal and informal collective structures that mobilize people and encourage them to engage in collective action (Kendall 2006; McAdam, McArthur and Zald 1996; Tilly 1985). Research questions grounded in a resource mobilization approach focus on the ways that social movements cultivate the motivations of people and acquire and use resources to attain goals (Kendall 2006; Kendall 2005; McAdam, McCarthey and Zald 1996; McCarthy 1996). This concept of mobilization contrasts with prior models, such as the collective behavior approach, which considered social movements as deviant behavior potentially resulting in desirable outcomes. In contrast, over the last three decades, resource mobilization approaches consider that most social movements are formed by reasoned organizations/institutions and individuals on some level consciously aware of their goals (Buechler 1999; Clemens 1996; Melluci 1989; Voss 1996).

Resource Mobilization Theory is based on the assumption that movement participants are rational and that social movements are goal-oriented activities. Resource mobilization theory considers that a core group of strategists develops sophisticated
initiatives to recruit and mobilize workers, redirect energy and motivation, attract financial resources, attract the attention of mainstream media, and develop elite allies (Buechler 1999; Kendall 2006; Rucht 1996). Resource mobilization theory argues that change cannot occur and movements cannot actualize their goals if resources are not properly mobilized. Proper frames and political opportunities do not adequately address and create effective social movement strategies unless paired with proper mobilization of necessary resources (Buechler 1999; Kendall 2006; McCartney 1996; Porta 1996).

Resource mobilization is primarily studied in two ways. First, a classic economics-based approach argues that complaints, problems, and political opportunities are not enough to overcome a movement’s lack of economic resources (Buechler 1999; Keller 2006; McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 2001; McCarthy 1996; Zald 1996). This classical approach assumes that movements follow a traditional model of supply and demand and that individual participation in movements is governed overwhelmingly by models of rational choice. While representing a large component of extant literature, critics such as Kendall (2006), McAdam (1996) and Tilly (1985) argue that an economics model alone will not adequately account for groups or communities that form based on long-term mobilization efforts such as slow recruitment. A second approach argues for a political version of resource mobilization theory. A political version is focused on struggle as opposed to the accumulation of economic capital. In opposition, some argue that this economic focus fails to account for groups that are successful in achieving minor changes or groups whose struggle and goals are less definable (Larana 1994; McCarthy 1996; Melluci 2000).
A final component of resource mobilization relevant to this project is the issue of organizational structure (McCarthy and Zald 1973). Successful movements vary in formality and structure based on the prescribed goals and resources of the organization (Edwards and McCarthy 1992; McCarthy and Zald 1973; Morris 1984; Porta and Rucht 1991). For example, there are informal movement structures such as activist networks, affinity groups, and memory communities which are far less formal than structures such as churches, unions, and major associations, yet still contain elements of movement. Conversely, there are formal units such as social movement organizations and protest committees (Edwards and McCarthy 1992; Kleidman 1993; McCarthy and Zald 1973; Morris 1984; Porta and Rucht 1991; Staggenborg 1991).

Framing and Framing Processes

Framing, a third component of social movement work, refers to the construction of a social phenomenon by specific social movements or organizations. Framing is an intentional process by movements, which separates them from pure unfiltered ideas embedded in movement participants (Goffman 1986; Zald 1996). Framing, as a process, attempts to exert selective influence over an individual's perception of actions and goals of social movements. A frame packages elements of social movements and movement goals to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others (Larana 1996; McAdam 1996; Snow 1996; Zald 1996). Framing is the message that both aids in the accumulation, and actualizes the existence, of resource mobilization and political opportunity.
First, it is important to discuss the formation of frames within social movement organizations. Framing works by drawing on the cultural stock of the social system in which it is being created. Proper framing connects the message of the collective seeking change to the deeply entrenched cultural values of the time and place within which it is being put forth. Zald (1996) points out that some frames will attempt to mobilize parties of potential interest while others will attempt to mobilize protest. For example, a prisoner’s rights group would need to frame prisoner’s issues within American concepts of liberty and equality while also paying attention to many American’s deference to victim’s rights and vigilante justice (Larana and Johnston 1994; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1978; Zald 1996). A group, for example, which framed ex-offenders as “the real victims in America” would not be successful, even if this message were true (Useem and Zald 1982). This contrasts with frames that are designed to incite protest or action, i.e. frames of contestation. Some frames appeal to what would be true for the limited group in which it exists. Zald explains:

To say that social movements draw on larger cultural stock is not to say that all social movements have equal access to that stock. Social movements, their leaders, and participants are differentially situated in the social structure. As such, they draw upon the repertoires and frames available to and compatible with the skills, orientations and styles of the groups that make them up. Middle-class whites do not have access to the emotional styles of the black church to facilitate solidarity in the face of fear; homeless women do not have the lobbying skills of Harvard-trained lawyers. Moreover, repertoires of contention and of organization have to ‘fit,’ to be ‘appropriate to’ the injustice. A violent tactic such as bombing a clinic feels right to antiabortion advocates who equate a fetus with a person; it is extremist behavior to those who deny that equivalence (267).

Here, Zald is explaining that some forms of contestation are based on the cultural stock available to a specific group at a given time. Continuing with the example of prisoner
rights groups, mainstream frames might exist to appeal to persons outside of the group but prisoner advocacy might be more appealing to a smaller percentage of the population and therefore frames might be created to use this available cultural stock (Goffman 1986; Toch 1965; Useem and Zald 1982; Zald 1996). Frames exist within most social movements at multiple levels.

Second, it is important to consider framing as a strategic activity engaged in by social movements for a variety of reasons. When social movements frame, with the intent of change, they are by nature countering an already existing frame (Goffman 1986; Melluci 2000; Zald 1996). This creates a cyclical relationship where groups and movements do not simply need to consider the proper frame to attract audiences and mobilize existing members, but also the counter-frames of groups with which they are in competition (Morris 1984; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow and Benford 1992; Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986). In the case of a prisoner rights group the counter-frames would primarily be the justification ideologies discussed in Chapter 2. Framing, as a process, is about the control of knowledge on a specific topic, idea, or initiative and, therefore, framing is concerned with dictating how people think about social issues (Foucault 1976).

Third, it is necessary to note the relationship that framing processes must have with both political opportunity and resource mobilization approaches. Frames are important in that they serve to accelerate and create political opportunities by creating cultural frameworks that shape political and social landscapes (Costain 1992; Freeman 1973; Gamson and Meyer 1992; McAdam 1996; Porta 1995). In addition, these cultural frameworks mobilize workers and secure economic capital (Costain 1992; Freeman 1973;
Gamson and Meyer 1992; McAdam 1996; Porta 1995). Framing processes additionally work with political opportunity and resource mobilization processes to create effective social movement outcomes.

**New Social Movements Theory**

Attempts to explain collective action can be muddled when certain collectives are highly unorganized and focused on intangible goals. This creates ambiguity in explaining the purpose and activity of certain social movement groupings, specifically whether or not movements are successful and how to classify movement goals. In this section I will explore what is often referred to as *new social movements*, which frames what scholars believe to be a differentiated form of social movements.

Although not embraced by all who study social movements, the term “new social movement” is understood as collective action that focuses more heavily on culture and change in dominant ideology than on the political or economic power, which is the focus of traditional social movements (Buechler 1995). This distinction between social movements and new social movements is important because new social movements’ foci suggest that highly structured organizations which rely on political opportunity and the mobilization of resources to gain political and legal change are not necessary for collective action to be considered as reflecting a social movement (Buechler 1995; Larana 1994; Melluci 1989; Taylor et al. 2003). From the standpoint of new social movement scholars, groups and activities that use symbols and information to express oppositional ideology and aspects of modern life through more loosely defined cultural means with the intent of changing attitudes and beliefs are also movements (Buechler
New social movement theories are relatively recent phenomena in social movement theory. These new theories emerged in the 1960's because of a perception that traditional perspectives have too narrow a view of the kinds of actions that constitute a movement. Specifically there was concern that traditional social movement approaches are overly Marxist and exclude organizations comprised of middle class or pseudo privileged individuals. Secondly, many argue that traditional movements narrowly define persons as part of a social movement only when they are inside of the confines of a traditional social movement organization and its actions. This excludes daily life and activity from having social movement implications (Buechler 1995; Kane 1997; Larana 1995; Mayer and Roth 1995). In modern society many conflicts are not based on the control of resources or political and legal gain. Instead, some current struggles focus on changes in perceived identity and affirmation of political relevance; collective action geared towards these changes is new social movements (Buechler 1995, Larana et. all 1994). New social movements theory is not embraced by all in the field of sociology because many argue that it is ahistorical (Calhoun 1995, Plotke 1990) and does not represent a distinct brand of social movements as much as it specifies a type of social movement that still relies on processes such as framing, political opportunity and resource mobilization (Calhoun 1995; Pichardo 1997; Plotke 1990). I do not embrace the premise that New Social Movements theory identifies a previously non-existent social movement. In other words, I agree that there is nothing new about new social movements, but consider the literature to highlight a form of social movement that transcends all three elements of movements previously described. Therefore, extant research helps with the framing of goals and actions of specific cultural movements.
THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT PARTICIPATION

My research considers political opportunity, resource mobilization, and framing in relation to the social psychological elements of social movement participation. Most importantly, this research examines in what ways the professed culture of social movements interact with the practiced culture of social movements to create sustained benefits to movement participation. Organizational and social movement approaches to stigma have proven very helpful in some instances. Social movement membership can have advantages even beyond the stated frame of the organization. Past research has indicated that many elements of movement participation and culture, such as conflict (Goldberg 2003; Shemov 2003), member-specific framing (Berbrier 2002; Ginwrigth 2002; Patillo-McCoy 1989; Reese 2003), diverse interactions (Bahr 1967; Maruna 2001), and contesting social norms (Hasso 2001; Klatch 2001; Pelak 2002; Reismann 2000;), contribute to personal narratives for stigmatized or disempowered individuals to escape the social and structural impacts of stigma.

This research rests on the assumption that a group could have professed political ambitions and aim for legal reform yet provide valuable psychological reassurances for the group members (Anderson et al. 1994; Goffman 1963; Martin 2000; Toch 1965). The work of Hans Toch, in his 1965 book The Social Psychology of Social Movements, provides an important foundation for understanding how participation in prisoner rights groups could be helpful for ex-offenders attempting to navigate the reentry process. Toch (1965) argues that membership and real participation in a social movement is an important social commitment that reflects an internalizing of values. The decision to join
and participate in a movement is not as much a political or social statement as it is an indication of the benefits achieved by the individual when joining and remaining a part of the movement. In other words, the benefits to participation, which are related but do not absolutely rely on achieving goals are often, if not always, more important than the goals of the movement (Jasper and Poulson 1995; Opper 1988; Toch 1965). Therefore, social movement participation is an excellent setting for understanding identity work.

My research is concerned with both the traditional and new social movement elements of CPA and what CPA can teach us about the desistance process. From a traditional perspective, CPA is an organization that actively contests legal and political barriers to prisoner reentry. In addition, CPA is very loosely organized and gears much of its protest towards redefining identity of prisoners through cultural and symbolic change. This research considers the symbolic change that occurs for members of CPA. In this section, I discuss how social movements appeal to and create opportunities for individuals that are doing identity work in their struggle with the reentry process.

Recreation/Decision to Join

This research is based on the assumption that certain individuals leaving prison can not form and maintain successful stigma management strategies on their own while others can and do quite successfully. A great deal of research has considered the function that social movement participation can perform for participants. As a result, this means that recruitment strategies and rationales for membership can factor into movement strategy and participation (Toch 1965).
In the recruitment of members, social movements will use a number of strategies
to gain membership. Toch (1965) argues:

Any aspect of a social movement that succeeds in ‘selling’ the movement by
attracting members to it becomes an appeal. Appeals are psychologically relevant
commodities. They are features of the movement that tie into the susceptibilities
of people. In other words, ‘susceptibility’ and ‘appeal’ can be understood only in
relation to each other. A person must be susceptible to something, or he is not
susceptible at all. In turn, appeals derive their appealing quality from the fact that
someone is attracted to them (p. 16).

In other words, social movements are often collectives of groups that are susceptible to
certain methods and ideas that can be possessed by a movement. Persons that are
susceptible then respond to an appeal from the movement; this is the key to membership.

Most movements measure strength in terms of numbers, so attempt to create appeals that
are diverse and far reaching (Berbrier 1989; Berbrier 2002; Passy 2001; Schoffer 2001;
Toch 1965). Toch (1965) adds “Social Movements in search of a mass following
frequently follow a saturation method, and try to present a ‘cafeteria’ of appeals, catering
to a diversity of needs (p. 17).” Thus, movements often use multiple appeals, some
potentially in conflict, to gain a broad group of individuals for membership (Berbrier
1989; Goldman and Papson 2004; Passy 2001; Schoffer 2001; Toch 1965).

Two ways of acting upon susceptibility are the use of latent appeals and ideology.
Latent, also referred to as disguised, appeals represent fairly conservative or mild
invitations that conceal far more radical agendas of an organization (Toch 1965). These
allow movements to draw in a broad collective of individuals while still fulfilling more
radical promises to individuals in search of a more aggressive agenda (GinWright 2003;
Patillo-McCoy 1989; Reese 2003; Toch 1965). For ex-offenders, the issue of prisoner’s
rights is one with both mainstream and radical foci (Petersilia 2005; Thompson 2008). While latent appeals might highlight parole and sentencing issues, along with reform of certain unfair practices within prison walls, these appeals might cover up or balance out appeals organized in more radical ways for other members of the group. For example, a group could promote reform issues to the public and then within meetings focus a great deal of attention on radical responses.

Toch (1965) argues that “the ideology of a social movement is a statement of what the members of the movement are trying to achieve together, and what they wish to affirm jointly (p. 21).” Any analysis of a social movement, indicates that while resources can play an important role in keeping membership in a group sustained, underlying ideologies are most often what keeps membership functioning and tends to separate primary from secondary involvement in the movement. For example, movements oriented toward an agenda for prisoner’s rights would support one or a combination of three ideologies. First, redemption places emphasis on the obligation of prisoner’s to improve themselves (Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; Maruna 2001). Second, reform embraces a mild support for redemption yet calls on the state to create change necessary to facilitate redemption (Maruna 2004; Petersilia 2005; Thompson 2008). Third, contestation, places emphasis on the state and centralized elite power as the cause of the specific ills the movement is targeting. In this ideology, redemption can be an important component but the state and power are identified as the central cause of the problem. Contestation is considered to be a radical ideology in that it places structures designed to fix problems as the cause of the problem.
In Chapter 2, I considered how persons use reference groups, and societal and organizational ideologies to define and present themselves and their ideas. I argue here that movements are an important source of reference for how prisoners understand their own problems, and solutions to those problems. In this next section, I consider how organizations use membership and ideology to construct counter frames to the justification ideologies mentioned in Chapter 2 of this text.

Organizational Stigma Management Scripts

The social psychological stance on social movement participation assumes that members of social movement groups become members because of benefits that they derive from membership participation as opposed to membership simply for the purpose of creating true change, although the two overlap. Herbert Blumer (quoted. In Toch 1965) argues that this makes the solicitation and maintenance of membership an exploitive process:

The gaining of sympathizers or members rarely occurs through a mere combination of a pre-established appeal and a pre-established individual psychological bent on which it is brought to bear. Instead, the prospective sympathizer or member has to be aroused, nurtured, and directed, and the so-called latent appeal has to be developed and adapted. This takes place through a process in which attention has to be gained, interests awakened, grievances exploited, ideas implanted, doubts dispelled, feelings aroused, new objects created, and new perspectives developed (p. 87).

Exploitation is most effective when neither institutions nor alternative social movements exist to solve an existing social problem (Toch 1965). Most research considers exploitation in a parasitic framework arguing that the process of exploitation causes false hope to be created for individuals who are part of the movement. My research considers
how one part of the exploitation process, appeals created to draw in susceptible audiences, may actually create positive, viable outcomes for individuals attempting to construct their identity in opposition to the state and mainstream norms regarding ex-offenders.

Chapter 2 fully details the problems that ex-offenders confront in the United States. As previously considered, ex-offenders are faced with, what arguably is, the most difficult form of stigma to confront as an individual, blemishes of individual character (Goffman 1965). As a reminder, blemishes of individual character are blemishes that perceivers attribute to personal choice and moral depravity of the stigma target. This means that perceivers hold the person nearly entirely accountable for her actions and where she has ended up in society. Chapter 2 also details how this labeling can create a number of problems for ex-offenders attempting to successfully reenter society (Maruna 2004; Maruna and Immarigeon 2001). Labelers of ex-offenders are aided by justification ideologies such as the concept of a just world, the idea that natural social hierarchies exist, and a Foucauldian system of knowledge I refer to as the punitive/rehabilitative discourse. These frames dictate norms for society, the power of which is that they force the stigmatized to find balance between minstrelization and complete contestation of the system. Applying a social psychological movement framework to the issue allows us to consider how movement ideology can help some individuals, those framed negatively in relation to the state, to create alternative conceptions of their stigma.

One way social movements help to achieve these goals is through the illusion of wish-fulfillment. Submitting to membership in a group represents, at least in part, a belief that change can occur somehow in relation to the problem identified by the movement.
Some groups exist that are in such dire circumstances that the idea of meaningful and helpful change is really an illusion. Some movements are successful in that they get persons to believe in an illusion of change (Melluci 1989; Toch 1965). Past research indicates that persons exiting prison who believe that they can succeed, stop committing crime, and reintegrate into society are more likely to do so than those who believe that they live in a world where desistance and positive self-identity is not possible (Maruna 2004; Sampson and Laub; Thompson 2008). Extant research rarely addresses the source of belief for individuals that succeed, literature on family being a noted exception. Ex-offender and prisoner movement groups, such as Citizen/Prisoner Alliance, focus on the idea that change in the conception of prisoners is not simply something worth talking about but something that is possible. Toch (1965) refers to this process as one of wish-fulfillment.

Wish fulfillment implies that wishes alone can achieve a difficult or undoable task. Groups such as CPA might appeal most to ex-offenders, prisoners, and family members who perceive the status quo to be hopeless and therefore need the illusory beliefs that this group provides. In fulfilling this wish, of hope, or at least delaying the recognition of defeat, these movements allow the stigmatized target to feel like he or she lives in a world where change is possible. Most importantly, the illusion of wish-fulfillment is paired with the idea of a miracle or the possibility of a miracle. Toch (1965) notes that “miracles provide prospects of change in situations that are objectively hopeless, and offer comfort and a basis for enduring situations that are objectively intolerable (pg. 43).” The belief in an appeal framed as a miracle may be the best option
for actors that are in the most intolerable of situations; it may be an act of self-preservation that aids in the formation of viable stigma management scripts for the individual.

Some of the most highly stigmatized groups are aided by frames that highlight conspiracy as an appeal for membership. Maruna (2001) argues that persons who fail to desist from crime upon reentry often engage in condemnation scripts which focus on an inability to change. This condemnation script is based on experienced failure and an inability to create a positive self-image (Maruna 2001). Conspiracy frames, as an appeal of social movements, are created to aid individuals that need to preserve self-identity and have experienced failure (Toch 1965). Conspiracy theory argues that there is a pervasive, all-encompassing force which holds down and creates problems for some segments of the population. In the case of ex-offenders, many persons leaving prison come to believe that parole officers, administrators, law-makers, and large percentages of the general public are part of a collective effort to make success more difficult. For many, at the individual’s level this manifests itself in the condemnation script. My research aims to discover how these ideas develop as appeals in collective groups.

Toch (1965) refers to conspiracy as a “jaundiced view of society (p. 45).” But this jaundiced view of society has the potential to solve, not create, problems. Two things make conspiracy appealing to those who are susceptible. First, conspiracy frames allow parts of the movement to create a common, and powerful, enemy. Movements that put forth conspiracy frame power as a central issue of conflict for group members. Second, conspiracy creates a clear argument for causation. Specifically, individuals can frame failures in relation to constraints placed upon them by the power elite. For a conspiracy
frame to help members, it is not important that the conspiracy be true or that the
movement fixes or overcomes the conspiracy. What is most important is that the
movement becomes a social site to internalize belief in the conspiracy and develop
individual strategies to cope with oppression. Conspiracy benefits members because it
makes them feel as though they are part of something collective instead of individuals
with little control over their futures. Also, knowledge of a conspiracy is perceived and
employed as elite knowledge. Members gain integrity, they perceive, at the cost of others
(Toch 1965).

In this section, I have attempted to demonstrate how collective action creates
frames that can not be used, created or maintained by individuals. Collective action
provides opportunities not available to individuals attempting to act on their own or look
to the state for help. This occurs in four ways. First, collective action solves problems
individuals cannot solve on their own. The formation of conspiracy and the maintenance
of illusion are best formed within groups. Second, social movements highlight and
identify problems that might not be identified otherwise. Third, social movements and
collective action make the intolerability of the situation requiring change consistent and
current for extended periods of time. Fourth, and finally, social movements give people
hope and make them think that the goal of the movement is something that is achievable,
even if it might not be.
Individual Adaptations and Actions

The idea that persons will internalize frames and ideas used by social movement groups to create their own personal scripts is an assumption of this research. Scholars such as Maruna (2001) argue that for individuals to change they need to be accepted into society. This is best achieved by the cultivation and maintenance of a pro-social identity which properly places the individual in a redemptive framework. In other words one where the person believes in and asks for, the chance to succeed. My research considers individuals that succeed with scripts that are not a solely redemption-based framework. I consider how elements of social movement participation such as wish fulfillment and conspiracy combine to create positive outcomes for ex-offender ego-identity and stigma management.

One of the primary individual manifestations of social movement participation is “seeing the light.” Social movement literature indicates that persons become members of social movement groups in three distinct ways. First, through early socialization to a cause, such as parents being involved in a movement or being affected by the cause from a very young age. Second, by a consistent and extended socialization process that follows the person throughout her life course, as when a person slowly progresses from a mild interest in politics to small forms of protest to full blown participation in an activist social movement. Third, and finally, persons become members of groups in near proximity to seeing the light (Toch 1965).

Seeing the light means that persons in social movements identify and internalize new information to create a new perspective on their own place in the world. Some of the literature refers to this process as conversion (Berbrier 2002; Thompson 2008; Toch
1965). Specifically, members of movements such as Citizen/Prisoner Alliance might identify and highlight ideas about the state or the general public that represent a stark departure from the general view persons have internalized to that point. Ex-offenders, because they are citizens first, are especially susceptible to mainstream justification ideologies of the state, such as hierarchy, just world, and punitive/rehabilitative discourse. Therefore, the conversion of some progressive offender advocacy groups can create very dramatic changes in the way an ex-offender sees the world.

It is important to note that the degree to which someone participates in social movement activity dictates the strength of the personal frames used. There are three elements of social movement participation that dictate the degree to which a participant has a belief in the ideology of the movement, and therefore can internalize and employ important stigma management frames. First, is the commitment of time given by members of the social movement. It is understood that the greater the period of time that is spent dedicated to the social movement the more firmly entrenched someone is in the ideology of the movement. Second, is the degree of authority that is given to movement and movement leadership in regards to control over knowledge and power in the area of change deemed necessary. Social movements aim to have authority over the specific thought process regarding the specific issue at hand in the social movement (Foucault 1975). Third, the degree to which members of a social movement willingly sacrifice autonomy indicates the degree to which they believe in the cause of the group.

These three factors culminate in a highly entrenched belief in the power and necessity of the movement ideology. Much of the social psychology literature argues that high levels of commitment are correlated with high levels of dogmatism (Melluci 1989;
Toch 1965). Most participants who are heavily involved with the movement will argue that they now have privilege to knowledge they did not possess prior to involvement. However, this conversion may represent the countering of one closed system of belief (mainstream justification ideologies) with an equally entrenched counter-system of belief in the contestation of the power being fought (Foucault 1976; Foucault 1975; Goffman 1986; Goffman 1963; Melluci 1989; Pelak 2002; Thompson 2008; Toch 1965).

In Chapter 2, I discussed Foucault’s concept of parrhesia, or speaking for a concept of justice that one finds to be true (Foucault 1984). For Foucault, the truth-telling of parrhesia is not about speaking the actual truth (of which Foucault denies the existence) but to speak of a truth that the parrhesiastes believes to exist. For Foucault, one advantage to such rhetoric is that the parrhesiastes conceives of and puts forth an ethical frame. A second benefit is that this ethical frame then allows the parrhesiastes to forge concepts of contestation and redemption as opposed to condemnation. I argue that Maruna’s redemption scripts are embraced by individuals that see no real reason to reject the dominant stigma model for ex-offenders. This is because these redemption scripts are embraced by individuals that are already equipped to deal with stigma. Parrhesia within a social movement allows individuals to frame a concept of justice and redemption that can be used to achieve mainstream values. Limited past research has indicated that contesting frames, based on distributing blame for failure to powerful forces acting upon movement participants, actually have the ability to inspire improvement action as opposed to excusing poor action. While Foucault, Goffman, and the creators and cultivators of labeling and attribution theory argue that the systems of knowledge in which people grow up dramatically impact persons’ abilities to consider different interpretations of events
and objects, such as ex-offenders themselves, this research attempts to argue that social movements and other comparable forms of collective action provide an opportunity for individuals to undo and recreate learning.

Internal vs. External Behavior

One consideration of this research is whether persons who are part of these social movements can use internal stigma management devices gained through social psychological elements of social movement participation to additionally form proper external social movement devices. A logical barrier to individuals attempting to create sustained successful stigma management devices is whether or not identities gained and performed in social movements, both ego and personal, are helpful for the prisoner’s conception of himself in a safe environment with like-thinking people around him (Berbrier 2002; Ginwright 2002; Patillo-McCoy 1989; Reese 2003). In this section, three permutations of personal and ego identity will be considered for individuals that embrace contestation frames in their interactions with the state.

Within social movement groups such as Citizen Prisoner Alliance persons have the ability to develop interactions with both ex-offenders and persons who have not been in prison (in CPA they refer to these individuals as Free-Worlders). This dynamic allows individuals to develop forms of ego and personal identity. Specifically, conflict and agreement with Free Worlders can serve as a training ground for both interacting with and adjusting to dominant discourses on criminality (Berbrier 2002; Bernstein 2003; Ginwrigth 2002; Goldberg 2003; Klatch 2003; Patillo-McCoy 1989; Reese 2003; Shemov 2003;). Since the majority of persons in a social movement will have opinions
and ideas about the issues of the movement, ex-offenders in CPA are negotiating in-group and mild out-group alignments, making minstrelization less likely and militancy more likely (Berbrier 2002; Ginwrigth 2002; Patillo-McCoy 1989; Reese 2003).

Previously in this chapter, I discussed how this militancy could be advantageous for certain types of ex-offenders. However, this internal behavior can manifest itself in a number of ways externally when ex-offenders need to identify and manage stigma in contexts outside of CPA.

One possibility is that individuals might attempt to match their personal identity in public to the ego identity that is developed within the confines of CPA. While the majority of research indicates that the manner in which ex-offenders understand themselves is important, nearly above all else, in impacting the success of a reentry bid, this is not the only part of a successful reentry movement. Members of a group as highly stigmatized as ex-offenders would likely face serious problems with attempting a militant and contesting persona in public, especially when relying on more mainstream units (work and family) for survival (Petersilia 2005; Soule 2004; Thompson 2008). Members attempting this more militant stance would likely isolate themselves and might succeed in limited interactions but overall would be ostracized (Iron 1998; Passy and Giugni 2000, Platt and Frazer 2001).

Perhaps the healthiest possible outcome would be those individuals that use experiences in CPA to create positive outcomes for ego and personal identity, both inside and outside of the social movement grouping. As previously discussed, many individuals join groups because of the benefits the group helps them achieve as opposed to the fruition of change (Edwards and Marullo 1995; Jasper and Poulson 1995; Opper 1988;
Toch 1965). This research considers how participation in social movement groupings might help individuals form personal scripts not available to them in other contexts. While this research challenges one possible interpretation of Maruna’s work, that redemption scripts are perhaps the only script that leads to successful reentry, I do move forward with the assumption that redemption scripts are ideal. One possible outcome for group members is that they will use movement work to form strong individual conceptions of society in the social movement, forms of contestation and redemption combined, but then in external cites such as the public put forth a redemptive personal identity that might appeal to the masses (Bahr 1967; Hasso 2001; Klatch 2001; Maruna 2001; Pelak 2002; Reismann 2000). This research considers how personal scripts can be developed in a collective framework and then be used to develop performances of personal identity.

Conflict and Resolution

Inevitably some members will not need movements in the same way as others. Toch (1965) argues that since movement membership is a self-interested status, disaffection from movement groups is based typically on three decision criteria. First, they realize once they become a member of the group that they do not agree with the underlying ideology of the group. Even if the ideology of the group could be helpful to them in the long run, it cannot be internalized because what they have learned over the life-course is too solidly incorporated into their own personal scripts. Second, persons understand and agree with the ideology of an organization but simply gain nothing from participation in the group because they have external influences that already provide for
them what is needed. Third, and finally, defection often occurs when conflict is at the center of a group. Some members will leave a group because they feel other members of the in-group alignment are not playing their part the way that they should. The question of defection from a group is important, because it helps us to understand success and failure inside and outside of the group.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to explain how social movements function both at the organizational and individual level, also considering the interaction between the two. My research considers CPA as a social movement, using new social movements’ literature to help understand the symbolic, discursive goals of some ex-offender and prisoner movements. I argue that social movements can be considered successful if they maintain a consistent membership who is content with its role in the organization. Specifically, social movements can provide balance, meaning, and purpose to the life of their members. Toch’s (1965) work indicates that the basis of social movement participation is what gains a member gets from participating, as opposed to, what the cause or goals are of the social movement.

Social movements provide a unique opportunity to individuals that have not developed the capacity or desire to create effective stigma management devices on their own. In this chapter I have also attempted to demonstrate factors that mediate social movement success, and therefore membership composition. Specifically, I argue that
effective use of framing, political opportunity, and resources differentiate movements that are successful at creating large scale social change and movements that primarily serve individuals who participate in the movement. Considering these aspects of social movements helps clarify the motivations of social movement membership.
INTRODUCTION

In this study, I explore how the dynamics of a social movement organization combine with the needs of individual ex-offenders to produce positive or negative stigma management outcomes. The preponderance of research on desistance uses secondary data to establish relationships between characteristics of ex-offenders and the likelihood of re-arrest or re-imprisonment. My work complements this research by providing in-depth ethnographic work on ex-offenders’ struggles with the process of reentry and desistance. What follows in this chapter is: an explanation of the research questions, a description of the mixed methods, and definitions of important terms for consideration.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problems and intent of this study pertain to three major areas of inquiry. With the primary concern of understanding how ex-offender identity is developed and managed in social contexts after release from incarceration, I ask
Question 1: In what ways does participation in Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA) contribute to identity work done by ex-offenders? Is interaction with “Free Worlders” important? Does participation in events become part of members’ personal scripts? Can membership and level of participation be linked to the desistance process?

While understanding ex-offender involvement is itself important, understanding the motivation for joining CPA by all members is critical to understanding how CPA helps ex-offenders and in what ways ex-offenders perform good identity work. This leads me to consider:

Question 2: Why does CPA membership work for some members but not for others? In what ways does CPA membership cause negative effects for members?

Finally, I consider success and failure of social movements not in terms of stated goals but in terms of what the movement achieves for individual members. Therefore it is important to ask:

Q3: How does the organizational culture, practice and dynamic of CPA contribute to the needs of individual members? What link exists between the professed goals of CPA and the practiced efforts of CPA?

METHODS

In the tradition of reflective science, I engage in a case study of a social movement group that will be referred to as Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA). I will extend theory on stigma management and social movements by exploring processes by which ex-offenders think about the reentry process and by locating this process in relation to external government forces. In doing so, I will draw on field notes from three years of participant observation with CPA, forty-one in-depth interviews with CPA members, and
analysis of archival documents. I attended private and public meetings of CPA, performances and speeches at numerous conferences and events, and demonstrations at public places in Ohio.

**Observation**

From June 2005 to August 2008 I maintained an active and consistent membership with CPA. I gained access to CPA in May of 2005 through email communications with a CPA executive board member who cleared with members that it would be acceptable for me to be a member while consistently collecting data during the membership. Active and consistent membership involves attending meetings that take place roughly every two weeks (N=65), participating in smaller planning and work meetings when needed (N=22), and attending as many events and rallies as possible (N=17).

CPA meetings represented the most important observational component of my research. Each meeting lasts roughly five hours starting at 10 A.M. and finishing around 3 P.M. with a forty-five minute lunch break. The morning component of the meeting often involves members catching up with each other and discussing the events of the previous meeting and what, if anything, was done by members who had been asked to do things before the next meeting. When the catch-up portion of the meeting is finished the group typically breaks for lunch; the group provides some lunch for members but many walk to a nearby place or choose not to eat. Talk is more fragmented but very active during the lunch breaks and this is where some of the most interesting and impactful data come. After the lunch break, typically the group will turn to new business, some of which
is on the official agenda but much of the new business consists of items added at the last minute by group members. While tangents and conflict are a regular component of CPA, it is after the lunch break that conflicts are more likely to occur and people are more likely to go off on editorial-style speeches. When the meeting concludes, I try to remain afterwards until everyone leaves because often this period of time is when CPA members will decide on meeting times to work on further initiatives. CPA meetings serve as an ideal environment to observe structural dynamics of CPA but also to observe how ex-offender members present themselves to each other and to others.

Attending planning meetings is a way of seeing how CPA’s professed culture is put into some form of practice or fails to reach its form. I attended as many of these meetings as possible. However, on occasion, someone running a meeting would prefer to keep the group as a select few and I would not be granted access. In addition, some members know each other well enough to set up meetings outside of any form of surveillance that I could use in my data collection. In planning meetings, a group of two to fifteen CPA members get together at a member’s house, or a public place, to do extra work needed for CPA to function or carry out mandates set in the main meetings. The most common goals in these meetings are the completion of labor such as folding and mailing brochures, doing research on a potential agenda, or brainstorming on a specific project discussed in a full meeting.

Over the three years that I was part of CPA, I attended part, or the entirety of, all but one public demonstration or presentation. The seventeen events that I observed can be divided into four categories: (1) tables at conferences (N=4); (2) work at public entertainment events (N=8); (3) representing CPA as part of social movements collective
At these events I attempted to help when possible but tried to avoid influencing the group’s actions and driving them in a direction that they were not naturally inclined to go.

In observing CPA, I had to pay attention to my place in the field, specifically, how my presence would be interpreted. While the group agreed to being a focus of my research, for many ex-offenders there was a clear lack of trust at the start of data collection. As I participated more in activities and showed up for planning meetings, most members of the group gained respect for and trusted my position in the group. At regular meetings and planning meetings it was easy to take notes during observations because many people were taking notes about what the group was doing. However, during lunch breaks I would have to talk to people with no recording devices. At the end of most lunch meetings, I would go to my car and record notes with my digital recorder, typically somewhere between three and five minutes of summary about discussions and events that occurred and subjects during interviews. I used the same method for planning meetings, where it is far easier to step away from the group for short periods of time. During events, I did not take field notes but relied on consistent breaks to record information onto my digital voice recorder. With very few exceptions, I wrote out field notes for each observation within two days of the event, in most cases within 12 hours of the event’s conclusion.

**Interviews**

I conducted in-depth interviews with key informants associated with CPA. This approach lent itself well to discovering social movement concerns such as contestation,
intentional, and collective action. It also allowed for understanding of important issues with stigma and stigma management that reside within individuals. Interviews are the best available tool for coming to understand the processes by which movements fail and succeed.

I interviewed forty-one individuals involved with the Citizen/Prisoner Alliance. I relied on a purposive sampling strategy because CPA’s membership is finite and only a certain number of people attend each meeting. The purposive sampling strategy yielded high quality data from respondents who have varying levels of involvement with the organization, are knowledgeable about the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC), and have the potential to impact how the social movement group is run. I identified potential subjects during meetings and CPA events. As a member of the group, gaining access was simple. However, gaining trust of the members was more difficult, as many CPA members feel resentment about the system and are at least partially sensitive to being observed. Therefore, I waited to do some interviews until late in the data collection process. At the first few meetings, I made a general announcement about my research and asked if people would be willing to be interviewed. Those that were gave me their phone numbers and email addresses (if available). Thirty-seven interviews were conducted over the phone and four were conducted in person. In the end, the sample of forty-one individuals is a group of people who cover the range of relevant groups residing within CPA membership.

During the selection process, I attempted to maintain a degree of diversity in gender, race, age, experience with CPA, and relative success within the group. Racially, the sample population is fairly diverse represented by respondents that are White (N=20),
Black (N=14), Latino (N=4), Asian (N=1) and Native American (N=1). There are eighteen males and twenty-three females. The age of respondents ranges from 20 to 65. Sixteen respondents are 35 or older and 25 are below the age of 35. The people I interviewed fit into six categories: (1) Free Worlders (N=5); (2) CPA heads from other states (N=3); (3) Members with high organizational affiliation and successful stigma management (N=18); (4) Members with low organizational affiliation and successful stigma management (N=3); (5) Members with low organizational affiliation and failed stigma management (N=7); and (6) Members with high organizational affiliation and failed stigma management (N=5).

The interviews lasted, on average, about one hour and thirty minutes and consisted of a number of open-ended questions that identified the person’s personal history, start of criminal career, beliefs about CPA, and techniques for managing stigma. Appendix A contains a general list of questions that were used during the interviews. However, the reader should keep in mind that the questions listed are not an exhaustive list. The interviews were indeed open-ended and the array of questions varied somewhat depending on the knowledge and responses of the interviewees.

Analyzing the data involved a number of steps. First, within 48 hours of each interview I listened to the recording of it and took notes, flagging parts relevant to the given research questions. Second, I used the constant comparative method attempting to consider each subject’s place in relation to the subjects already interviewed. In the constant comparative method, there is a consistent theory of the population that is slowly being developed. I approached each interview with the assumption that the working theory could be changed by new data. This method allowed me to identify important
themes but not be tied to one specific theory of membership. Of note, the eight interviews that I conducted with out of state heads and free worlders were not coded through the constant comparative method, because those interviews were primarily informational and used to get a better understanding of CPA’s structure rather than how the subjects respond to CPA. As I assessed the interviews, I placed excerpts of them into different themes. Some of the themes found include: use of free-worlders, public scripts, collective identity effects, private scripts, contestation frames, redemption frames, condemnation frames, important events in CPA history, criminal admissions, reentry complaints, and movement is successful frames. Through the constant comparative method, I was able to readily identify recurring or consistent themes in the forty-one interviews, and a steady continuum of CPA responses.

Content Analysis

To assess the function and use of CPA, differing ways of understanding the self, and the factors important in shaping CPA frames, I also conducted a limited content analysis of CPA documents to which I was granted access. I performed a content analysis of five separate sources of archived or written information regarding CPA and its activities: (1) Email chains; (2) Newsletters; (3) Website Content; (4) Official minutes and budget reports; and (5) Unofficial handouts distributed within CPA meetings. CPA members, especially the executive board, send many emails to each other regarding CPA events and issues related to CPA’s mission statement. Over the three years of data collection, after deleting emails that were simple questions of clarification and response, there are 1,205 emails. The content of these emails ranges from political discussion to
furthering arguments from prior meetings. Regarding newsletters, I was a member of CPA for the distribution of twenty-nine newsletters and was able to look at six newsletters released before my point of entry. The CPA newsletter is always eight pages long and contains a series of announcements along with stories written by CPA members. The CPA website offers little information not present in the newsletters, however I checked the website at least once per week for the duration of my data collection. I have possession of agenda, official minutes, and budget reports from the 65 meetings I attended and the three meetings that I missed. Finally, at each meeting a set of handouts was distributed. These handouts vary from newspapers articles about the death penalty to applications for other prisoner rights groups. These five sources of data, while less helpful than observations and interviews, provide depth to the discussion of framing in CPA. These sources were coded in a manner similar to the coding scheme used for interviews and were also approached using the constant comparison method of analysis.

RELEVANT TERMS

Reentry

Reentry is generally understood as the process in which prisoners exit prison to reenter society. The expectation is that during reentry prisoners will attempt to lead a life that is free from criminal behavior. Literature varies somewhat, with some defining reentry as simply the first few weeks post-release, while others extend reentry until two years have passed or parole and probation has ended (whichever comes first). For the purposes of this research, reentry describes the first eighteen months a person is out of prison.
**Desistance**

Criminal desistance is another word that criminologists have debated with some regularity over the last decade. Desistance is generally understood as the process by which offenders cease to commit crime. Some literature argues that it is unclear how someone can be classified as having stopped doing something that she can conceivably return to at any time (Maruna 2001). Or, if the definition is based on the idea that desistance is a process that starts when the last criminal act ends, the standard would be broad to the point that persons not committing crime at any second would be considered desisting. In this research I consider someone as having desisted if two things occur: (1) he or she does not end up back in prison within 18 months of release; and (2) he or she does not confess to further criminal behavior during my data collection period.

**Stigma Management**

Conceptions of stigma management such as those put forth by Erving Goffman do not rely on concepts such as success and failure. Stigma management is generally understood as a process whereby a target understands and responds to stigma vis-à-vis his or her social, ego and personal identities.
Success

In this research, I define a subject’s stigma management as successful when he or she expresses a clear concept of redemption and how to move toward the goal of redemption. This does not require the person to have faith in the state. Rather, she must establish an identity that is geared toward redemption and/or rehabilitation.

Failure

Conversely, I define failed stigma management as occurring when individuals express pathways toward condemnation, implying hopelessness and no path for the future. This coding is based on Maruna’s distinctions, discussed in Chapter 2.

Affiliation

Affiliation with CPA is measured primarily by regular attendance in meetings, some occasional attendance at planning meetings, and some casual attendance at CPA events. Regular attendance at meetings with some level of participation in discussion in most cases is enough to compensate for near complete lack of participation in planning meetings and events. I did not consider a person to have a high level of affiliation unless they had at least 6 months of membership with CPA.
CONCLUSION

A combination of interview, observation, and data analysis allowed me to gather a great deal of data on CPA members and CPA as an organization. From these data, I am able to generate theory on the relationship between social movements and their members, specific to the context of ex-offenders and the way they deal with stigma.
INTRODUCTION

The Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA) is a national non-profit organization dedicated to the rights and well-being of ex-offenders and their families as well as reform of the prison system. CPA supports rehabilitative initiatives and occasionally, at the organizational level, supports more revolutionary ideas, such as eliminating the prison system. CPA has been in existence since 1985. The Ohio chapter was established in 1986 and as of the end of my data collection claims 450 dues-paying members. Roughly two-thirds of the members are current or former prisoners and their mission statement includes both traditional social movement goals as well as a belief that the public conception of criminals needs to change
Governmental

= Express ex-offender agenda to ODRC.
= Establishing government ties to push for prison reform.

Inter-Organizational

= Establish ties with other prisoner reform groups
= Bolster intergroup ties to gain greater understanding of prisoner agenda in Ohio.

CPA

= Foster independence for ex-offenders.
= Determine and develop leadership in the ex-offender community.

Familial

= Provide outlet for concerned family members.
= Serve as a voice for concerned family members.

Individual

FIGURE 1: THE STRUCTURAL ROLE OF CPA
CPA is a multi-faceted organization that is designed to play a number of roles in social structure. Figure 1 illustrates the role that CPA is designed to have in four different areas of social structure. First, CPA is designed to interact at the governmental level. At the governmental level, CPA is suppose to lobby for prisoner and ex-offender issues and establish powerful contacts within the ODRC and other branches of government. Second, CPA is designed to interact at the individual level. At the individual level, CPA works to improve the lives of its members and foster independence in ex-offenders. In addition, CPA is suppose to identify leaders in the inmate and free world population in order to create a more powerful voice for ex-offenders. Third, CPA is designed to interact at the family level. At the family level, CPA provides information for concerned family members of inmates and ex-offenders, and serve as a voice for those family members. Fourth, CPA is designed to act at the inter-organizational level. At the inter-organizational level, CPA should develop ties with other prisoner reform groups in Ohio in order to effectively strategize for prison reform and ex-offender rights in Ohio.

The Ohio chapter of CPA presents a unique case study. At the start of data collection, CPA had recently started under new leadership as the prior head had moved out of the state. This allowed me to see a temporal unit of CPA from inception to close. While this project focuses on individual level adaptations to social movement membership, in this chapter I profile the social movement elements of CPA. In understanding CPA’s level of movement success toward achieving the goals identified in Figure 1, I can better conceptualize the motivations of individual members. What follows is a profile of CPA. First, I discuss CPA as a social movement that succeeds when
considered from a social psychological perspective. Second, I discuss the concept of CPA as a failed social movement when considering the traditional sense of what social movements are and what they are supposed to achieve. Supporting this, I discuss how CPA employs resource mobilization, political opportunity and framing.

CONCEPTUALIZING CPA AS A SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL MOVEMENT

An Example: September 24, 2006 - “What is it that we do again?”

I was running late for this meeting because I forgot to get directions to the new meeting place the night before. I was supposed to speak first or second at the meeting about whether I had talked to the Mid-Ohio Workers Association about their annual calendar, something the CPA is considering doing in 2007 as a fundraiser. In addition, today was a very important meeting because we were supposed to discuss writing a grant to secure more funding for CPA-OHIO. As I drive up to the spot for our new meeting, a reformed church that Trishelle and her partner had been attending recently, I could see Dizzee and other members of the group standing outside in a light rain while Trishelle talked on the phone.

The rain let up as I got out of my car, inquiring about the situation. Dizzee and Julia seemed frustrated and explained that Trishelle was supposed to have booked the basement of the church but the church was locked. Trishelle got off the phone to explain that the spiritual advisor for the church was delivering sandwiches to the poor and would be back within a half hour or so, over Trishelle’s objection the members decided to find a new meeting place; McDonalds. Roughly 2/3’s of the people decided to make their way to the second meeting place so into McDonald’s came quite the motley crowd. A 70 year old woman with a beehive haircut agrees to split a large fries with a thirty-something, well built black male with dreadlocks, a visual that sums up the composition of CPA. After a series of value meals was purchased and seven tables were pieced together roughly 24 members of CPA sat around to hear the board discuss important prisoner issues. CPA-OH has very little money and seems to get by month to month. Many of their activities are financed by active group members. Getting a grant would help the organization quite a bit.

“How the fuck would you know, I have been doing this for years, I get grants all of the time.” Dawn screams at Dizzee. Dawn represents one of two sides of an argument that seems to center around whether or not the group should get help from someone. My name gets offered up but I quickly let them know I didn’t have the experience to do this. Dawn is yelling at Dizzee because Dizzee has stated that he thinks it would be helpful to get advice from a professor friend of his in the writing of the grant. Dawn seems angered by this, and starts listing
off a whole group of organizations that give grants. This devolves into an argument among six or seven persons who seem to compete over who has the best vague story about a grant that they or someone that they know were given (this conversation lasts for almost 45 minutes). What is strange is that at the end of this long conversation there seems to be an air of confidence among the group; they seem positive that getting money from someone is inevitable, so confident that they never decide from who. The discussion switches to what should be done with the funds.

C.C., a timid free worlder, who speaks once or twice in any meeting but is one of the few persons that seems to come prepared to every meeting, suggests that one thing that we could ask for in a grant is funds to give year-long memberships to persons who are incarcerated for free (the fee is normally $5). This idea, although appreciated by some, is shot down by Trishelle and Mitchell who argue that when they were incarcerated they were able to pay it so others should as well. Suggestions were also made by Fausto, Brady, Dahlia and Donnell all of which were shot down by other members of the group. Each suggestion led to a number of stories about problems that ex-offenders overcame in prison or complaints that free-worlders have about the current system. Every suggestion, no matter who suggests it, seemed to be demeaned on the basis that the ex-offenders in the group did not benefit from all of these things and made it so why should we do this now. In other words, although this collective of individuals were gathered, in theory, to help individuals in prison, few of the members seemed interested in doing anything of the sort.

After two and a half hours of conversation on this topic Donnell felt the need to say something. “We have to do something, otherwise we are just asking for money to meet at McDonald’s.” Although this seems like a fairly rational objection to the tone of the meeting, most of the members of the group seem frustrated by Donnell’s comments and various members of the group berate him verbally and tell him stories of glorious things that CPA has done (mostly individual acts of kindness from different members). It is not uncommon for members of the group to get into screaming matches that seem like fighting but do not have any emotional residue. After the fight with Donnell the group adjourns. Donnell looks at me and says “what is it that we do again?” and I never saw him at a future meeting. Donnell has a good job with a high occupational prestige score and a lot of self-confidence; he was also a member of other groups. For Donnell, CPA seems to have lost its impact and use value. Surprisingly, the rest of the group seemed to think that it was a great meeting; the grant was not mentioned again for almost a year.

The events of September 24, 2006 are fairly representative of CPA meetings and present a perplexing scenario for the outsider: why would individuals continue going to these meetings and how could anyone consider the meeting described above to be a success? A
second, larger question, is why would people continue participating in a group that seems to do nothing. I argue that organizationally, CPA is successful in creating meaning in the life of many members that lack other means to gain meaning in their lives. Toch (1965) argues that some social movement groups incorporate conspiracy into their daily practices. Conspiracy is essentially framing the government or the powerful as the cause of the disempowered groups’ problems. Blaming the powerful is quite helpful for group members because it rationalizes the members’ failures in life. What makes the meeting mentioned in the above field notes a success is not that anything was achieved, but that failures were in many ways rationalized by group members. CPA illustrates that achieving professed social movement goals is normally secondary to the benefits of participation and value that is gained by group members, the latter was accomplished for most CPA members during this meeting (Toch 1965).

My research rests on the assumption that a group could have political ambitions and aim for legal reform yet provide valuable psychological reassurances for the group members (Anderson et al. 1994; Goffman 1963; Martin 2000; Toch 1965). The work of Hans Toch in his 1965 book The Social Psychology of Social Movements provides an important foundation for understanding how participation in prisoner rights groups could be helpful for ex-offenders attempting to navigate the reentry process. Toch (1965) argues that membership and real participation in a social movement is an important social commitment that reflects internalizing values. The decision to join and participate in a movement is not as much a political or social statement as an indication of the benefits achieved by the individual when joining the movement. In other words, the benefits to participation, which are related to, but do not absolutely rely on, achieving goals are more
important than the goals of the movement (Toch 1965; Opper 1988; Jasper and Poulson 1995). Therefore, social movement participation is an excellent setting for understanding identity work.

One manner in which CPA could be conceptualized as a success is to consider its action through the lens of new social movements theory. As a reminder, four important dimensions distinguish new from traditional social movement. First, in new social movements symbolic action is a central movement strategy in both the cultural sphere and civil society (Buechler 1995; Melluci 1989). Second, new social movement theorists focus on self-determination and autonomy as goals, instead of gains in legal and economic power (Buechler 1995; McAdam et. all 1996). Third, while the focus of traditional social movements is on material gain and access to resources, new social movements focus on post materialist values: problems that cannot be fixed by monetary compensation or legal change. Fourth, while social movement literature often focuses on centralized organizational forms as necessities in the creation of successful social movements, new social movement theory accepts that loosely formed temporary groupings are often instrumental in creating collective action (Buechler 1995). These four dimensions provide the foundation for new social movement theories and are critical to fully conceiving of how movements can be successful, even when they fail to achieve traditional movement goals. In Chapters 6 and 7, I detail the individual responses from group members to the symbolic actions of members, this will provide a more detailed understanding of CPA as a successful social movement.
CONCEPTUALIZING CPA AS A FAILED SOCIAL MOVEMENT

As a prisoner rights group, CPA professes to advocate for prison reform and help ex-offenders reconceptualize their lives. The group’s place in the structure of criminal justice is to serve as a check on state control. I came to CPA with the idea that it would be a group of individuals that employed strategy and utilized resources to achieve movement goals. After a period of five months, I realized that CPA fails to act as a social movement in the traditional sense of the word. The group’s structure hinders attempts to mobilize or secure resources, to utilize or create political opportunity or to live up to the frames of mass appeals they use to bring in members. In reference to the CPA meeting described earlier in this chapter, these events are fairly representative of CPA meetings and demonstrate the problems that can occur within CPA structure. People regularly leave CPA because it fails to accomplish its described goals.

Resource Mobilization

As discussed in Chapter 3, resource mobilization refers to the formal and informal collective structures that mobilize people and encourage them to engage in collective action. Variables considered in a resource mobilization approach highlight the manner in which social movements foster motivations in people and harness resources, broadly understood, to frame and achieve movement goals. CPA, as is the case for all social movements, is limited or advantaged by the resources it has at its disposal. What follows is a discussion of CPA’s use of funds, social and cultural capital, as well as leadership and membership.
Funds and Capital

In numerous forms of capital, CPA is deficient at best. In three years of observation CPA’s budget never surpassed $1,400 and often was between $200 and $250. As a point of comparison, CPA members that I spoke with from four other states had budgets varying from $3,500 to $15,000. CPA does not apply for grants, does not accept funding from government organizations, and makes no attempt to solicit large donations from potential donors. These problems are primarily self-inflicted, as CPA members consistently ignore or downplay the need for funds while simultaneously complaining about the need for funds. My field notes from one meeting demonstrate this problem with resource mobilization:

C.C., consistently one of the most diligent members of the group, asks to add new business to the agenda and is given the opportunity to do so. She says that she has three different opportunities to earn money for CPA. The first involves working stadium cleanup after a triple A baseball game, for which the group can receive $1,500. The second involved working concessions at a game for the same baseball team which can gain the group anywhere from $500-$2,000. The third involves rotating shifts on a paper route for a period of six months; C.C. is not sure about the financial benefits from this activity. The group almost immediately dismisses the paper route idea (I didn’t really care for the idea either) and then starts to question her heavily on the other two options. Trishelle starts to question C.C. about whether the team representatives will be monitoring them and asks how much money the triple A baseball team will make off of them. Betsy comments that cleaning up after a baseball game seems really demeaning, something Jimmy strongly agrees with. Deuce, Dizzee and Darrell all express concerns about not really being interested in food service or cleaning up after a bunch of people. A motion is then brought up by Dahlia for C.C. to do further research on how the event might be an exploitation of labor and then come back to them with a full report. The committee votes in favor of this and then they move on to other new business.
According to my notes, the next meeting C.C. reported her findings. I also did research and found that these are activities done by dozens of groups a year ranging from churches to political parties and they are offered by the baseball team as a public service; they gain no money from offering these work opportunities. C.C. and I spoke about this, and I also offered that if we were to do both of these activities, our budget would be three times the largest it has been in years. The board and other members still seemed very skeptical about doing the work and a motion is presented, with no clear reason, to cease discussion on the topic. The opportunities are described by Jacqui as “a little shady.” A month later C.C., myself, and sisters Alana and Tawanda agreed to work a concession stand for one of the games and we made $200. Following the game, the four of us, joined by Vitamin C, Brady and Jolene, participated in the cleanup after the game, securing another $175. The donation of $375 was given to CPA at the next meeting and was met primarily with surprise and a bit of laughter. Some members made fun of us for the work that we had done. This interaction is fairly typical over the three years I work with CPA. In the case of C.C.’s suggestions, the resistance is counter to numerous conversations within CPA. Among the top ten things regularly discussed in meetings, the need for more funds so that the group can really start to do more things is toward the top. Resistance to a simple and profitable suggestion indicates that the goal of securing funds is secondary to the identity work that is done within and outside of CPA meetings. Numerous suggestions are made by persons over the years, mostly by free worlders, that are rejected outright. Structurally, the group lacks any codes, rituals, or procedures that make fundraising an important, or necessary, component of the group’s existence.
The vast majority of CPA funds come from three sources. The first, membership dues, accounts for the overwhelming majority of CPA’s budget. Members are asked to pay a membership fee of $10 a year or $5 a year if in prison or recently out of prison. People are also given the option of paying $50 for a lifetime membership. In exchange for these dues, you can be a voting member of CPA and receive the monthly newsletter. In most meetings, less than the over 400 members of CPA were up-to-date with dues but were still receiving member benefits. In addition, for those who do not pay dues, the newsletter is provided each month on the website for free. I have a record of persons suggesting that CPA block free access to the newsletter website on seven different occasions. When this is discussed, members often shoot down the idea as being too mean, or as being an insignificant issue, and no actions are taken. The occasional attempts toward fundraising are often ill-prepared and ill-conceived. In the second year of data collection with CPA, Trishelle and Dahlia pushed hard to get 50 CPA t-shirts made for $150. While there was some dissent, the group voted to get 50 extra-large white T-shirts made with a CPA logo, with the belief that people would pay $10 a piece for them at the group’s events, only 11 were sold over the next two years. Other initiatives to create promotional calendars and put on bake sales were never acted upon. The funds from these three sources are the only financial resources that CPA has to take action. These limited funds prevents the group from putting on grander events, providing transportation for rallies, and funding labor to do more advanced work that could secure them larger amounts of funds. While the national chapter of CPA requires that a treasurer be part of the executive board, there are no mandates on fundraising initiatives or minimum funds required to maintain existence. This allows CPA chapters to more easily be subverted and
facilitates the casual approach to fundraising in CPA, which also limits the ability for the group to achieve traditional movement goals.

CPA also has limited social and cultural capital. As will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7, the vast majority of CPA members do not have strong ties to influential people or Columbus elites. While many claim to know people that can do things like write grant proposals and get meetings with elites in government, more specifically the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), these claims are rarely, if ever, substantiated. Overall, CPA’s greatest cultural and social resources are limited or excluded.

CPA established a meeting in the third year of observation with a high-ranking official in the DRC, this meeting is referenced at the beginning of Chapter 1. Five members of CPA were allowed to attend this meeting that would last about 30 minutes, the point of the meeting being to create a contact within the DRC so that CPA could have a greater impact on policy. A meeting of this nature calls for CPA to present itself as a professional organization that is open to working and negotiating with the DRC. In addition, if this meeting were to go poorly it is likely that CPA would get a very bad reputation amongst other government officials. My field notes for the account of how they picked the five CPA members to go are as follows:

We get to the point in the agenda where we decide the five members of CPA that will attend the meeting with a high ranking official in the DRC. Thinking over the last two weeks it seemed clear that the five members that go should be as, for lack of a better word, normal as possible to present CPA as a group that should be respected and seen as intelligent and agreeable, even if that is not the end intent. For these reasons, I believed that Betsy, Becky, Trotter, Don and Lena should go. Betsy is a working ex-offender that is well spoken and has been with the organization for a long period of time. Don is a successful businessman that is very likable, he is also the most mainstream looking and acting male in the group. Lena is the second longest standing member in the group and has no self-interest in criminal justice issues, therefore comes off as objective in her desire for
prisoner rights. Trotter is young and at the very least, seems incredibly intelligent. While Trotter is the most politically aggressive of the members I would choose to attend, he speaks in a contentious, as opposed to condescending manner. Finally, Becky is young, well-spoken, well-dressed, knowledgeable about the system and attractive and charismatic. While most of these factors should not be important they clearly are helpful resources in establishing contacts and so to me the choice is clear….As I expect, the decision does not follow these criteria. Betsy, Trishelle, Dahlia, Deuce and Lena end up going. Betsy and Lena seem to go for reasons consistent with my thoughts and are agreed to almost immediately by the group. Deuce, a well-respected member of the group asks to go to the meeting, but immediately announces that he “will not be dressing up.” The group quickly agrees to him as well. I feel quite certain that in the meeting he will be seen only for what is “scary” about him as opposed to his intellect. Trishelle fights her way in through a series of screams and rants that seem to eventually wear out, as opposed to convince the group. Dahlia is well liked in the group and after fighting to get in is also accepted. I feel almost certain that either Dahlia or Trishelle will have a burst out in the meeting and will hurt CPA’s contact with the DRC.

I later found out that my predictions were right; Trishelle and Dahlia both had outbursts and the meeting was shut down early. Numerous other legitimate steps that could be taken toward using and/or gaining access to resources are shut down by CPA, or in the case of a member like Donnell, shut out. CPA has no formal policies that dictate how decisions will be made in circumstances where representatives of the group need to be picked or public presentations of CPA need to be organized. This allows for forceful dialogue and intimidation to be a tactic used to secure power within CPA.

Leadership and Membership

The sanctioned leadership and general social organization of CPA is structured and practiced in a manner that discourages the claimed goals of the group. There is no president or vice-president of CPA but instead an executive board that consists of a treasurer, secretary, meeting chair, web designer, ombudsman and member-at-large.
While Betsy and Trishelle remained on the board all three years that I observe the group, the other three positions change regularly and are selected at meetings that have only a small percentage of membership present. While leadership ideally would provide structure to a group like CPA, it is more often the source of a lack of structure. On 15 different occasions, members spoke on behalf of CPA without getting the permission of CPA, including a letter to the editor of the newspaper in Columbus, Ohio. When I ask Betsy why she likes being committee chair she says “well, it’s the best way to not get ignored, I like having some say over how things are done.” This is typical of CPA leadership, which often seems guided by personal agenda over group dynamics. Leadership in CPA-Ohio fails to attend any of the six national CPA events that leaders are typically expected to attend. Leaders fail to serve as a mobilized or mobilizing resource. The national chapter of CPA fails to mandate regular communication with state leadership. There are also no guidelines for how elections will occur or rules that dictate the number of members that must be in attendance for an election to occur. Organizationally, the group lacks the ability to monitor leadership or hold them accountable.

Ex-offender Members

The vast majority of dues paying members are ex-offenders or persons still in prison. This demographic represents about two thirds of the group. Based on field notes, observation, and secretary minutes, I would estimate that of every ten people that come to their first meeting, about three return for anywhere from one to five more meetings and only one lasts longer than that. While there is a core group of ex-offenders that regularly
or irregularly attends meetings, I never see the vast majority of ex-offenders that are technically members of CPA. In fact, I only encounter a handful of members at events that have not already attended a meeting. This points to poor organization of the members by leadership and by group members. There are few, if any, discussions of securing transportation for individuals attempting to go to events or meetings and there are no attempts to make people aware of the events outside of a list-serve used to email all sorts of information to CPA members. In one meeting, I suggest creating a phone bank to secure larger participation at rallies and planning events. The idea is dismissed by Trishelle because “a lot of members don’t have phones.” Other members seem to endorse Trishelle’s objections despite the fact that our membership log includes phone numbers for the overwhelming majority of ex-offenders.

**Free World Members**

Free Worlders are members of CPA that have not spent time in prison. This distinction seems to be an important one for CPA and CPA leadership since in the official minutes of each meeting, the secretary divides members in attendance by “Inmates” and “Free World.” The distinction is important in that free worlders are assumed to have less knowledge and less authority to speak about prisoner rights issues. Often times free world members are held up as representative of the general culture of oppression that ex-offenders in CPA feel exists. When I first entered the group a number of the members seemed hesitant about trusting me; Dizzee even asked me if I was from the Department of Homeland Security. At the same time, free worlders seem to be included in the group because those who do not like them still accept that they are likely good for the overall
cause of CPA. In this respect, CPA considers free worlders a resource, and many ex-offenders use interactions with free worlders to negotiate personal stigma scripts that they might use in public.

I interviewed five different free worlders that remained consistent members of the group throughout the three years that I was in CPA. Although free worlders are not central to the questions that drive my research, the existence of free worlders in CPA is relevant to the motivations and stigma management of ex-offenders. As would be expected, free worlders in CPA are overwhelmingly sympathetic to the plight of ex-offenders. Although the vast majority of free worlders embrace a reform perspective over a revolutionary one, they hesitate to argue with the expertise of ex-offenders. In this sense, free worlders as a group tend to feed into the ex-offender dominance perspective that shapes the vast majority of CPA events. My motivations for joining CPA were grounded in an academic interest in social movement, stigma, and criminal desistance. In general, free worlders fit into one of three categories: Interested Observers, Knowledgeable Outsiders, or Passive Hippies.

Many free worlders seem motivated by a desire for just treatment of prisoners and ex-offenders. Don, a very wealthy white gentleman in his 50’s who owns his own financial consulting business had been a member of CPA for three years already when I went to meet him. He wears at the very least a button down shirt with tie to every meeting and often wears a suit. He talks with some regularity; however he is a bit more inclined to speak with the older ex-offenders because he seems to lack the ability to communicate well with people his junior. He is nice and probably the best liked free worlder in the group. In our interview, I determine that he has no real connection to
criminal justice issues but started coming to meetings because he wants to make a
difference and experience something with which he is not familiar. Don states:

I was kind of always wealthy, I mean my family was rich when I was growing up
and I do well now. And like I always thought of myself as a Democrat and
someone that cares about the little guy you know...and I would give to charity but
that was about it. And then there just kind of came this moment where I realized I
don’t even know people that vote Democrat, or like all these people that I am
supposedly caring about..so I just found CPA online. To be honest I have to admit
I started looking for a group like this because of the TV show Law and Order.

Don comes to CPA out of a desire to help. He is very likeable and has a common man
feel to his speaking that contributes to other members interacting with him on a regular
basis. Lena is the longest standing member of the group having been part of CPA six
years prior to my data collection. She is a short, unimposing white woman in her 50’s
who works in a library and attends every single meeting. Lena tells me “yeah I’m the
senior member, which is kind of funny if you think about it because I don’t really have
any reason to be interested in this, I just liked the first meeting and kept coming,
otherwise I’d just be watching TV or reading or something like that.” Lena stumbled
upon CPA when they held a meeting at her library. She has been the secretary for CPA
for five years and is well respected by the ex-offenders. Lena does not speak much and
when I ask her why that is she states “well these people know better than I do, I just feel
really sorry for a lot of them.” Lena and Don both serve as sympathetic and interested
outsiders that never present a real threat to the agenda of various ex-offenders.

A number of Free Worlders in CPA join the group because of a relative or close
friend in prison, I term these individuals Knowledgeable Outsiders. These members are
often quite interested in the reform elements of CPA and are far more likely to push for
action in the group. C.C. is a younger white woman who works as a receptionist. Her husband is serving a 15 year prison sentence for rape and she is very interested in sex-offender laws, but also prison reforms in general. She speaks in meetings often, comes with notes prepared, and volunteers for CPA activities. When I ask her what she gets out of CPA membership, she says “I guess I feel like I am doing something, I feel kind of helpless, like I don’t really know what else to do with Mike in prison. So I feel like at least I am doing something.” While ex-offenders often seem moderately annoyed by C.C.’s suggestions, Free Worlders with family members in prison are often given a bit of a free pass when they are persistent. Bobby is an African American male in his early 30’s who works as a youth mentor. He has two brothers and an uncle in prison. He says he likes the meetings because “I like hearing people talk about how unfair the system is because I feel that it was very unfair to my family…..I also feel like I am doing my part, like I should be doing something.” C.C. and Bobby are free worlders looking for ways in which to understand their situations and contribute in some way to making things better for inmates, and ex-offenders in the group are able to help them achieve these goals.

Other free worlders, that I term Passive Hippies, seem interested in being part of CPA purely because of the diverse experience that it brings to them. Rain is a 25 year old, white woman in law school who regularly comes to meetings but seems to have no interest in participating in the meetings. She talks to people quite a bit during lunch breaks. Rain is prone to volunteering for CPA activities and then failing to show up. When I ask about her frequent no-shows, she says “yeah..I feel bad about that but I am kind of busy with school and I just forget.” She says that she comes to meetings because “it is just really energizing to be around such a diverse group of people. I feel alive
connecting to all the different stories and experiences.” Rain comes from an upper-middle class family in northern Ohio and seems primarily interested in the identity that she can claim from interacting with persons different than herself. There are clear social distinctions that are made within the group between ex-offenders and free worlders but there is no formal distinction made between the two; this allows interesting identity negotiations to occur within the group that will be given more detail in Chapter 6.

**Political Opportunity**

CPA, seems to indirectly ignore, and at some times discourage, the utilization of political opportunity. As a reminder, questions based in political opportunity attempt to understand social change studying the limitations created and opportunities provided by political contexts in which social movements exist. Tarrow (1989) defines political opportunity as “consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent—dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics.” As discussed in Chapter 3, some social movements seem to use political opportunities to move toward social movement goals while others aim to create political opportunities for change. CPA ignores the concept of political opportunity of both types.

At numerous points during my time with CPA, opportunities arose for CPA to take action on goals it regularly establishes in meetings, yet nothing was done. There were: two executions; the DRC introduced a new proposal to decrease recidivism; there were numerous shifts in leadership of the DRC; there were police scandals in two cities in Ohio and; there were a number of state hearings on prison reform issues. Of all these political opportunities, none were used as a basis for planning CPA actions and only one
was mentioned in the monthly CPA newsletter. At a meeting a few months into my observation, I attempted to argue that the new DRC report on recidivism could serve as an excellent springboard for CPA actions and could give CPA a voice. Mitchell responded that “there are no springboards for the stuff we want to do.” This seems to be the basic attitude of many regular members of CPA. In my second year, I suggested that we organize a death penalty protest the night of an Ohio execution and was told by Betsy that “this seems like a bad time to do that because there will be so many people into the execution that they won’t care, wouldn’t it be better to do a protest when there isn’t an execution going on because then people might be more open-minded.” While Betsy’s argument is well taken, she and other members of CPA seem to ignore that events make largely apathetic populations more interested in a topic.

In addition, the group is hesitant to take actions that might create political opportunities for others. A number of initiatives that I would describe as more symbolic are suggested and rejected while I work at CPA. In one meeting, Dahlia and Mitchell suggest civil disobedience in protest of infringements on religious freedom in prisons. In a social movements sense this is a good suggestion, because it is the sort of action that might bring awareness to a topic that gets no real attention in public discourse. The group overwhelmingly votes to avoid the suggestion because “we don’t want to give ourselves a bad name.” With no real concept of political opportunity, the group’s actions are guided by unpredictable interest levels more than political strategy, even when political strategy is suggested.
Framing

A third component of social movements worth evaluating is framing. As a reminder, framing refers to the construction of a social phenomenon by specific social movements or organizations. Framing is generally understood as a process that social groups or components of social groups engage in intentionally, which makes it different from unpolished ideas of social movement participants (Goffman 1986; Zald 1996). Therefore, in analyzing framing, in CPA I am looking for attempts to exert influence over perceptions of actions and goals of CPA. A frame packages elements of social movements, and movement goals, to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others (Larana 1996; McAdam 1996; Snow 1996; Zald 1996). What follows is a description of both the external and internal frames used by CPA.

External Frames

By external frames I refer to the frames used to promote the group to outsiders and recruit members of the group. For example, I was drawn to the group because of its focus on reform and its interest in the reentry process. CPA’s external frames seem primarily driven by the concept of redemption and reform. CPA’s mission statement includes specific references to rehabilitating ex-offenders and reforming the criminal justice system. Anecdotally, persons who are familiar with CPA tell me that they know it as a group that lobbies for prison reform and tries to help make the process of reentry easier for ex-offenders. CPA’s general reputation is good, when I talk to chapter presidents and ask what CPA does I am told that CPA rehabilitates criminals and attempts to reform the criminal justice system.
Over my three years with CPA I had 13 opportunities to serve as a representative of CPA at some public event where recruiting new members was cited as a definite possibility. While I feel that the overwhelming frame of meetings is condemnation and contestation, I am led to discuss redemption and reform at public events. At a music festival in central Ohio CPA had a booth set up to distribute information about CPA. Our booth was set up in conjunction with another social movement group that focused on aiding families of inmates during incarceration. What follows is a section of field notes from my shift at the music festival:

Our goal is to recruit new members and make people aware of important prisoner rights issues in Ohio. Over the period of my 4 hour shift I fail to encounter a single sober person or a person that is above the age of 30. I feel really uncomfortable advocating for CPA because I see them as a group that does very little even though I am suppose to describe them as a successful group that achieves a great deal in Ohio; however that seems disingenuous given my experiences with the group. I work with Betsy and Trishelle for most of the shift and I witness them regularly tell people that CPA is an organized group that has good connections to the DRC. To my surprise even Trishelle didn’t talk much about more aggressive policies and seemed fairly reserved. I hear her talking about how CPA is just trying “to help people who need help and encourage prisons to be more responsible.” Trishelle never talks like this and I find the use of these frames peculiar. Betsy talks a lot to people about specific initiatives that they are planning to change how the prison system works. She talks to a young man for a while, explaining restrictions on work and school for ex drug offenders. The man seems interested and gives her his information. At this point I have been in CPA for a year and we have never taken an affirmative step to create legislation or influence thought in this area.

I speak with Betsy at the next meeting and ask if she thinks that we are giving an accurate presentation of how CPA works and she replies “well yeah..I mean we sugarcoat it a bit, but yeah..haha...I mean I don’t want to tell em that half these people are crazy..hahah.”
Reform and redemption frames are also quite common when encountering representatives of the state. Myself, free worlder Lena, and Jacqi are sitting at a table for CPA at a conference attended by academics and criminal justice officials. When a parole officer comes to the table and starts to ask about CPA Lena is talking to him for a while about issues with parole and then tells him “There are a lot of people leaving prison that are trying really hard to make it and can’t because there is so much pressure on them and so many opportunities taken away from them, and CPA is all about helping those people get on their feet.” This message again strikes me as a bit disingenuous and when asking her about it she says “well that’s what we want to do at least, it’s our goal, and it’s the things we do that appeal to the most people.” Throughout my experience with CPA there was a consistent attempt to frame CPA’s mission in terms of redemption and reform. The intentional framing is based on a conscious recognition that a great deal of CPA’s work would not appeal to mass audiences.

Internal Frames

By internal frames I refer to the frames used by groups and individuals within CPA’s structure. Internal frames highlight the advantages that members get from group participation. Internally, frames of reform, condemnation and contestation are common. In meetings, reform is not something that CPA is very confident in; however it is still an important and consistent part of CPA’s mission and actions. With some regularity there will be discussions of the best way to fix a specific problem with the prison system or a law that needs to change.
Frames of condemnation and contestation highlight the impossibility of reform and the difficulty of redemption, in part due to state control. This is a consistent frame used within the confines of CPA meetings and is put into place by leadership as well as elites within the group. The condemnation script is put forward in two different contexts of CPA. First, condemnation scripts are put forth as official parts of CPA meetings. At the start of each meeting an agenda for that day is handed out. On average, two topics for business reflect this particular script. Some of these examples include “Religious freedom in prison hopeless,” “Attempts to reform sex laws impossible,” “Time to stand up to state on phone issues,” “Time to change the narrative on state rehabilitation,” and “Taking on parole officer abuse.” In addition, messages of contestation and condemnation were regularly recognized and acknowledged as important components of CPA meetings.

Second, these contestation and condemnation frames are put forth in CPA electronic communications. Members of CPA are incredibly active via email. I have 1,344 emails from CPA members over a period of three years. While I get the sense that many people do not read the emails they are significant because they contact all members of CPA, as opposed to the 50 or so that attend meetings with any regularity. Despite this wider circulation the emails are written in a far more relaxed vernacular and are a bit more aggressive than some of the statements made at the meetings. In one chain of emails about parole officer abuse a member writes, "I think its time to give up on the idea that parole officers are ever going to do anything good or productive or helpful for our brethren, its never going to get better, its never going to happen. The DRC know how to fix the problem but they don’t, because they don’t want to. The sooner we realize this the
sooner we can let go of some of the anger and help ourselves.” This email is fairly representative of about half of CPA emails that do not involve basic announcements about meeting times. The concept of giving up is framed as empowering. This email is condemning in terms of chances for success and contesting the state for not doing more. While there are limited restrictions on how CPA meetings are supposed to run, the group has accepted that the rules will be flexible. This gives a stage to individuals that wish to vent about the criminal justice system or the reentry process. In CPA, internal frames differ dramatically from external frames. These differences make a great impact on who will stay in the group.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have profiled the social movement activities of CPA at the structural and individual level in an attempt to understand what members get out of CPA membership and what factors impact the successes and failure of this social movement. I argue that CPA has governmental, individual, familial, and inter-organizational mandates. Structurally, there are a number of factors such as a consistent “laid back” approach to how meetings are run, limited accountability for anyone in power, poor fundraising efforts, and leadership structure which contribute to CPA’s consistent lack of action in both governmental and inter-organizational mandates. Lacking success at the governmental and inter-organizational levels limits the ability of CPA to retain members that are interested in tangible and identifiable action and change.

However, these same norms that appear as failure also can contribute to CPA’s success at the individual and familial levels of affiliation. I argue that members who stay
in CPA do so, in part, because of the social psychological benefits of participation. Specifically, CPA membership fosters varying internal frames that members can use to create effective stigma management scripts
Chapter 6:

Succeeding in the Movement:

Developing Stigma Management Scripts via Social Movement Participation

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5, the Citizen/Prisoner Alliance Ohio (CPA) was explained through the traditional and social psychological lens of social movement participation. I note that by traditional understandings of social movements, or any organization geared toward achieving a stated goal, CPA is not a success story. CPA uses a variety of conflicting frames, but does a poor job of disseminating these frames to populations outside of their constituency. CPA consistently suffers from poor use of funds and a lack of resources, such as office buildings and copier access. They also push, when possible, non-offenders to lower positions which can cause problems when CPA addresses mainstream groups. CPA seems to reject wholesale the concept of political opportunity, unable to involve itself when important criminal justice events occur in the state of Ohio. Despite these deficiencies, CPA maintains a consistent membership over the three years that I observed
them. In addition, 29 of the 33 ex-offender members that I interviewed stayed out of prison for at least two years, far surpassing the average chance of returning to prison for a group of ex-offenders. Thus, it appears that while CPA fails in achieving traditional movement goals, there is something about participation in the group that creates positive outcomes for many of its members. In this chapter, I explain the ways in which members of CPA use group membership to foster viable personal stigma management scripts and effectively care for the self.

Toch (1965) argues that participation in social movements has far less to do with the goals of the movement than with the individual benefits attained by members of the group. In research highlighted earlier in this text, intensity of participation in social movements is linked to the intensity of belief in one or more ideologies of the movement. Of the 33 ex-offenders in this sample, I define 21 as successful in the reentry process. In this and the following two chapters, I will analyze four different intersections of organizational affiliation and successful stigma management. In this chapter, I highlight the ways in which 18 ex-offenders translate sustained CPA participation into personal and public identity scripts that aid in the process of reentry. This group represents the upper-left quadrant of the 2x2 table seen in Figure 2, possessing high organization affiliation and successful stigma management.
Members discussed in this chapter overwhelmingly exhibit three types of stigma management behavior which form a continuum starting with more conservative forms of stigma management to more contesting non-traditional models of stigma management.
Figure 3 shows the continuum of scripts as affected by experience. Redemption scripts, as discussed by Maruna (2002), give the members viable options for hope and personal satisfaction. I highlight two common forms of redemption scripts that I term *I’m Not That Crazy* and *Free World Interaction*. In these analyses, I extend Maruna’s approach by demonstrating how some individuals develop redemption scripts in interaction, as opposed to them simply being fostered within the self. Redemptive Contestation scripts, allow members to combine seemingly conflicting frames of redemption and contestation (similar to condemnation) to form a superior stigma management script. I discuss two dominant models of redemptive contestation: an optimistic version that I refer to as *Seeing the Light* and a pessimistic version titled *Conspiracy*. A third form of stigma management emerges from the practice of parrhesia. As is discussed in Chapter 2, Foucault argues that parrhesiastes has the ability to care for the self through the use of fearless speech about topics of justice. I highlight how the use of parrhesia, fostered in CPA, helps some individuals create viable stigma management devices. As will become clear, most individuals discussed in this chapter evidence multiple types of stigma management behavior. However, they trend more heavily toward one. Each individual will be mentioned in the section on his or her dominant form of stigma management.
PATHWAYS TO REDEMPTION

In his book on prisoner reentry in the United Kingdom, Maruna argues that the most significant difference between ex-offenders that reoffend and those that desist is the personal narrative used to rationalize their places in the world. Reoffenders use condemnation scripts that frame their places in the world as hopeless. Desisters use
redemption scripts which frame the ex-offenders as persons that have worth and value to the rest of society (Maruna 2001). Scripts can also be understood in relation to the looking glass self and ego identity. As a reminder, the looking glass self is the idea that individuals will start to see themselves as society sees them. This occurs via internalization or rejection of stigma justification ideologies of the target’s social system. Persons using redemption scripts often need validation from someone that is a member of the perceiver class.

Justification ideologies in America are intense, making the study of the United States a unique inquiry for the study of stigma management work and the creation of personal scripts (Maruna 2001; Petersilia 2005). In the United States, ex-offender targets have the task of reconciling their perceptions of themselves, their ego identities, with the social identities that are protected by justification ideologies. In the United States, these ideologies are the Just World Perspective, Social Darwinism, and Punitive Rehabilitative Discourse. Consistent with the looking glass perspective, the redemption script can be an ego identity which manifests itself into positive outcomes. Maruna does not address parts of the redemption script that might be associated with personal identity, the way that a target is perceived in relation to her stigma. In this section I attempt to extend his analysis and discuss how ex-offenders form both public and private redemption scripts, allowing them to more successfully reenter. What follows is a more in-depth explanation of two specific redemption scripts created by members of CPA.
Well, I’m Not That Crazy

One of the many reasons that ex-offender status is a troubling stigma is that it is viewed as a personal choice of the offender. Criminality is what Goffman terms a blemish of individual character. With this stigma comes the assumption from perceiver populations that targets have flawed character. Persons who possess blemishes of individual character must learn to deal with the assumption that they are different in character, temperament, and reasoning from the rest of the population. Redemption scripts can aid targets in dealing with such assumptions in two ways. First, by preventing the message from being internalized, and second by dictating interaction with outsiders.

One strategy used by many members in CPA is to form redemption scripts that frame the problem in relation to other members of the group, identifying themselves as superior to other ex-offenders in the group. Each member of CPA does this in some form, but the most intriguing cases are ones in which ex-offenders set up interior constructs of deviance to create a hierarchy with its own stigma justification ideologies. At a meeting in early 2006, this sort of categorizing emerged. In my third meeting with CPA, it became clear that most, if not all, individuals in the group negotiate the desires to be part of a collective and an individual. In a somewhat heated meeting regarding how leadership would be established in the group, CPA took a 30 minute break, where people
immediately segment off into small groups. This process is seen regularly in my field
notes.

When the break began, I found myself at a bit of a disadvantage. Some of the
members of CPA still seem a bit hesitant around me. In fact Trishelle made a
joke, I think it was a joke, that she didn’t want me following her because she
didn’t want “the government to know what I do on my breaks.” I had to go to my
car to get my cell phone and on the way back into the library I ran into D-Wayne,
Michael and Janet smoking cigarettes outside. I ask them how they are enjoying
the meeting and they begin talking about how much Dizzee and Darrell are
bothering them. “I’m crazy but I ain’t that crazy” says Janet as she gives D-
Wayne a high five. Michael explains to me that he thinks Dizzee and Darrell are
crazy because they talk so much about the government. He refers to them as
conspiracy theorists clearly designating them as less aware than he.

After talking for a few more minutes about plans they have that night I
head back upstairs and actually see Dizzee and Darrell talking in a very
passionate way while sitting in two movable chairs just outside of the bathrooms.
When I walk up they are discussing something that had happened to an inmate in
Youngstown, Ohio, but they stop after I am there for a second. I ask them how
they like the group so far today…they immediately start complaining about Janet.
Dizzee says something to the effect of “that bitcher isn’t going to be on the board
here, I don’t want to start spending CPA money on weaves.” I learn that bitcher is
a term Dizzee uses for persons that are both a nigger and a bitch. After going off
on Janet a bit more the two men start to settle down and engage in a joint sigh.
Breaking the silence Darrell looks down at the floor and says “Yeah, there are
some niggers at these meetings make me feel special.

Talking behind the backs of others is so common at CPA, it seems to be by mutual
agreement that no one seems to get too upset about the gossip. At this meeting, I was
introduced to the consistent attempts of small groups to segment off and create scripts
which framed superiority to other members of the group. D-Wayne, Michael and Janet,
all of whom will be discussed in chapter 7 on failure, identified themselves as the
“realest” members of the group, which they seem to perceive as a strength they possess
over Dizzee and Darrell. Conversely, Dizzee and Darrell add a dimension of racial politics to this particular instance of framing. They feel D-Wayne, Michael, and Janet represent the average ex-offender and this construction of the average makes them feel special. Problematic members seem to come and go, and while for some this could be annoying, the more stable members of the group seem to revel in the failure of some of the temporary members. In a meeting in early 2007 Deuce, a young man in the group, says “every time these people drop off, I feel like I’m closer to winning the lottery or something.” When I ask him to explain his statement he says, “well it’s just like, I don’t wish people to leave the group or go back or for them to not get it or something, but like, like, like when they do I just feel like that makes me that much stronger, like, like I got this handled, like I’m in charge of myself more so than other people control themselves.” With the failure of others, group members construct themselves as what Maruna (2002) calls “a diamond in the ruff.”

_I’ve Come A Long Way Baby: Betsy_

One clear example of this form of redemption is Betsy. Betsy is a middle-aged (in her early forties) white woman from a small town an hour or so outside of Columbus; she has lived in this small town her whole life. She is one of the first people I met in CPA because she is a member of the executive council. When I first met Betsy in person, she was less harsh than I pictured her being; in our phone communications she had stressed a
tough blue-collar lifestyle and a rough past. In our first meeting, she was dressed in a very feminine manner and seemed incredibly maternal, asking me to sit next to her for the first few meetings so that she could take care of me. Betsy has been in prison twice: once for possession of cocaine and once for shooting a former boyfriend in the leg. In all, she has spent seven years in prison but has been out for over a decade now. She has a son that has been in prison for the last five years for rape; this in part drives her to continue her work with CPA.

When I first asked her about working with CPA, she said that this was fine but stressed that “CPA doesn’t seem to get much done recently.” I asked her why this is the case and she explained that I will “understand when I come to the first meeting.” Of all the persons I met in CPA, Betsy is the only ex-offender to consistently go to meetings while feeling that the group achieves very little. Betsy shares her frustration with me at a meeting in March of 2006: “I mean some of these people are crazy, and they wouldn’t be here if they didn’t think that they could get something from us. Some people think that this group is some sort of charity or social service. They don’t get that we’re trying to make a difference [she says with frustrated tone and hand motions as if she wants to strangle someone].” Betsy tries at most meetings to get people on the same page and fails either because she: (a) gets in a fight with another member, most often Trishelle; (b) gets caught up in the tangents of the group and unintentionally adds to the madness; (c) gives
in to frustration very quickly and withdraws from the meeting; or (d) has an idea that has not been fully thought out and it falls flat when explained to the group.

Betsy is attempting to keep people on track to discuss an initiative that would allow phone companies to compete for the business of prisons as opposed to allowing an exclusive contract that is more expensive for Ohio prisoners. After explaining the initiative and asking people for their thoughts, Trishelle quickly jumps in to note that Betsy didn’t properly follow Robert’s Rules of Order, rules that are followed very irregularly in CPA. After correcting the mistake, Dizzee begins to talk about the phone situation when he was in prison...Dahlia and Mitchell add stories as well. After roughly 15 minutes of story-telling and intermittent questions regarding the initiative the meeting goes silent for a few seconds. “Well do we want to take a vote then” asks Betsy. “A vote on what?” asks Brady and the rest of the group also seems confused. “The phone initiative!” Betsy barks. “Honey, whatever you want to do with that is fine with us I’m sure” says Dahlia. The group begins to get up for the lunch break. While Ellen seems upset she doesn’t seem surprised or unfulfilled, just upset, as if she knew that would happen but proceeded anyway. She spends most of the lunch hour complaining to me and free-worlder Lena.

After the meeting I have the opportunity to talk with Lena, a free-worlder that has been in the group longer than Betsy. Lena tells me that the group has never done much more than they are doing at the moment and that Betsy complained just as much before as she does now. She thinks that Betsy just likes to complain. In fact, the meetings continue to be like this for the entire time I collect data; the members seem more comfortable in the unstructured meetings than when attempts are made to make it structured.

In the summer of 2007, I attended an interdisciplinary conference on ex-offenders in Dayton, Ohio with Betsy and Clara Sue. CPA had set up a table and I volunteered to sit at the table and promote the group with Clara Sue and Betsy. I notice that Betsy and Clara Sue have very little to tell people about CPA and what it does. A number of people come to speak with us but leave soon after. Clara Sue spends most of the time talking to people about a very similar conference that will occur one month later in Cleveland; CPA
is not responsible for the conference but Clara Sue makes sure to tell everyone about it. Betsy spends the vast majority of her time telling people that CPA is a group that helps ex-offenders and families of ex-offenders. Most significantly, Betsy tells people that the group used to be a lot more powerful but that “better people” are needed for the group to move forward. Over the months that I was in CPA, I cannot say that Betsy did any more work than anyone that she tended to criticize. She does seem to talk a lot more about doing things. It is significant that when representing CPA in a leadership role, Betsy’s primary message is about the group’s ineffectiveness.

In our interview, Betsy attempts to distance herself from the ex-offenders in the group. “I have come a long way baby, a lot of these people are just crazy. I kind of feel like I am the best of both worlds because I have the experience that these other folks have got but I kind of feel like I’m more….hmm….I guess civil, like the freeworlders tend to be.” When I ask her why she continues to be in the group despite her thoughts on it being highly unsuccessful, she states “Well I just think that if I don’t do it then no one will, even though they drive me crazy sometimes I feel sorry for these people and I feel like I have a gift, a talent for helping people, so it would be selfish for me to not do this job.” Betsy works in a low prestige job at an apartment complex and seems to have little family. CPA gives Betsy a tool to use for the construction of a proper redemption script. In many ways, she embraces dominant ideologies that oppress ex-offenders while attempting to be active on prisoner issues. Her consistent rituals of complaint in her scripts indicate that part of what makes Betsy successful is that she can frame herself as being so much better off than other ex-offenders.
I Have So Much to Teach Others: Trotter

In contrast to Betsy’s scripts which allow her to feel helpful and civic-minded, others look to CPA to identify their own intelligence as a reason for being exceptional. When I first meet Trotter he is 26 years old. He has been out of prison for about a year and joins CPA about three months after me. A year prior, he finished his second stint in prison for auto theft. By his third year in CPA, he had secured an administrative job at a community corrections agency in central Ohio. Initially, he seemed to possess very little social capital and did not speak the first two meetings that he attended. In the third meeting, during a discussion of supplies available to inmates at most prisons, Trotter inserts himself into conversation for the first time arguing that food and toiletry supplies available for purchase are a “cycle of inequality” that force prisoners to act as slaves in order to survive. His comments seem to resonate with a number of group members and people continue to refer to them throughout the rest of the meeting. During the break, Trishelle and a few others go up to speak with him and to compliment him on “getting it.” This moment serves as a springboard for Trotter who starts to regularly speak and attend meetings.

While Trotter was in prison, he secured bachelors degrees in both theology and criminal justice, something he mentions quite frequently over the period of time that I get to know him. His participation in meetings is mostly limited to making what he calls an “academic contribution.” Invoking his intelligence and educational background with some regularity is clearly a way for Trotter to set himself apart from others in the group. In our interview he states that “most of these people don’t have the dual experience that I have. I mean...I’m an ex-offender but I have a good education and I think of myself as a
pretty smart guy. I feel like I have so much to teach others in the group.” When I ask him what he thinks makes for a successful meeting he responds “well, when I get across my point and feel like I have gotten others in the group to think about things in a different way, like a smarter way, I feel like it is a success.” This answer is consistent with Toch’s (1965) argument that persons often enter groups not for the mission of the group but for what can be achieved from membership in the group. Trotter attends CPA functions but rarely helps. When manning a table at a music festival in town he did not hand out literature or try to recruit for CPA but engaged in a series of long conversations with people at the festival attempting to engage people in philosophical discussions.

One day I get a call from Trotter asking if I can pick him up from his home to bring him to the meeting because he cannot get his parents to bring him. When I arrived at their home his dad follows him out and motions to me to roll down the window. “You the professor?” he asks. I respond “Yes, that seems to be what they call me.” His dad responds, “well watch out for Trotter, he thinks he’s smarter than everybody, he’s going to try to teach you something.” Trotter seems very annoyed by the encounter which is consistent with the numerous times that he has told me about how his parents and siblings do not understand him and are “ignorant.” At the time of this encounter time, Trotter washes dishes at a restaurant, lives with his parents, and has a criminal record giving him high stigma and low respect. “Thanks for picking me up, this is my favorite part of the week.” This statement demonstrates the usefulness of CPA for a person like Trotter, a place where he has the ability to feel smart and be respected. He has the ability to rationalize away the other contexts of his life that cause him pain because he constructs his redemption scripts inside the boundaries of CPA. When I drop him back at home,
there are a number of people in his front yard. While I cannot hear the conversation it is clear that the men are making fun of Trotter. This is something that could potentially have a greater social psychological impact if Trotter did not have a group where he could understand himself as what Maruna terms “A Diamond in the Ruff.”

**Free World Interaction**

In chapters 2 and 3, I discussed the difficulty that many ex-offenders face in managing their stigmas in interaction with non-offenders. I contend that the criminal justice system is currently ineffective in properly preparing inmates for the reentry process. Earlier, I discussed the role that justification ideologies play in the continued repression of ex-offenders’ opportunities. Given that acceptance from non-offenders is key to cultural and social capital, the ability of ex-offenders to interact with perceivers is critical to success. Many ex-offenders have issues with doing so because they feel wronged by the state and by perceivers.

What follows are a series of examples of a pathway to redemption I term *Free World Interaction*. Many of the ex-offenders in the group use free worlders as testing grounds for negotiating personal and ego identity. While free worlders are a diverse group, they are somewhat consistent in their belief that inmates and ex-offenders are treated poorly. Therefore, they serve as sympathetic perceivers.

*I’m Having A Showdown With College Boy: Paris*

Paris is a very attractive, black female in her 20’s who joined the group four months after I started my research. She moved from Indiana to Ohio to be with her
boyfriend and soon after was arrested for brutally assaulting a woman whom she believed was “hitting on” her boyfriend. While she was serving 18 months in prison her boyfriend was arrested and sentenced to over a decade in prison for rape. Because she had lived in Ohio for only a short period of time she exited prison with no close friends or family members. By the time she entered CPA, she had already been fired from two different jobs.

Through the two and a half years I observed Paris in meetings, she was regularly combative with multiple members of the group. Unlike some ex-offenders, Paris generally lacked an interest in discussing problems related to people who are incarcerated; she primarily seemed interested in discussing issues faced by people upon exiting prison. She got in multiple fights with free worlders as she was especially concerned about them not being experienced enough to speak on criminal justice issues. At a meeting in the second year of observation, I made a comment about women’s prisons being a little less severe than men’s prisons in overall treatment of inmates. Paris interrupts my statement to say “what, you think we deserve to get it harder, you want to beat us or something?” Deuce asks her to calm down and she says “No, fuck this, I’m having a showdown with college boy” and starts to walk toward me in an aggressive manner, she is asked to leave the meeting for that day, which she does while flipping me off.

A week after my encounter with Paris, she apologized and asked to do an interview with me for my project. She starts by saying “look I love you, I just kind of resent you for knowing so much but like not knowing anything you know...it’s like I know you were saying something that was true, but like I just wanted to punch you in the face
for knowing it was true...does that make any sense?” I asked her why she thought that
she so consistently got in arguments with free worlders. She responded:

I don’t know, I mean I like talking to you guys its just like I get so frustrated in
life, I have anger issues (laughs), I mean obviously I have anger issues and like I
am just in all these shitty jobs, although one is finally starting to work out. I think
that like sometimes I take out some aggression on you guys and it helps me like
calm down a little bit when I am not there. Like I don’t know if you noticed, but
like I don’t really do anything but go to the meetings, because like the meetings
are good for me (laughs) you know like a punching bag.

Paris is the only person that I interviewed who openly accepts CPA’s therapeutic value.
Most persons in the group will deny therapy and argue that they only participate in the
group because of the good the group is doing. Paris uses the group to vent so that she can
form more believable redemption scripts in public. She argues that part of the reason she
is now able to keep her job at a recycling plant is that she is able to think of free worlders
in the group as exceptions to her general feelings of oppression caused by mainstream
justification ideologies. In sum, through conflict with free worlders in CPA she gains
control over her personal and ego identity in public. She is clearly detached from the
stated focus of the group but the group fits into her rituals of redemption.

That Cup of Coffee Saved My Life: Mini

While some members use CPA to negotiate anger, others use interaction with free
worlders as evidence of acceptance and care. Mini is a white woman in her early 30’s
who is barely five feet tall. She has already been part of the group for three years when I
arrive to CPA and is one of the most liked persons in the group. She was in prison for
“some sex stuff, some drug stuff, and there’s some other stuff I could have been in for but
never got caught for.” Her waitressing job occasionally causes her to miss meetings but she comes to most and also attends as many CPA events and demonstrations as possible. She does not speak much at the meetings but always brings a notepad and pen and takes vigorous notes. This is probably why her main contribution in meetings is the recollection of past decisions and activities.

At a break during one of the meetings I am standing outside with Mini, Donnell, and Fausto as they begin to talk about the group a bit, seemingly for my benefit. Mini discusses how when she first came to CPA she was a little frustrated with the world and concerned about the ability to get out of her circumstances, primarily because she lacked education, a strong family structure, and job skills. She tells a story about her second CPA meeting which I ask her to retell during our interview:

Okay, I don’t remember exactly how it happened but I showed up to one of the meetings. Early because the time had changed but they informed people via email or something like that so I didn’t get it because I don’t use email...and apparently Don had the same idea because he showed up too. And...um...well I was a bit uncomfortable because in the previous meeting I had talked a bit about what I had done to be in prison, and you know the sex crimes, and like robbery and stuff and I didn’t really know this guy. So Don called someone and realized that we were like an hour early and asked me if I wanted to go get a cup of coffee while we waited. So I don’t know I just found that weird because he wears a tie to every meeting and I am like wearing a tank top and look all ratty and just well, its just that we don’t really fit together, I don’t get out to the suburbs a lot. But I said okay and since I don’t have a car he drove me and we went for coffee. And then we just sat there and talked for about half an hour and we never talked about prison or any of the stuff the group talks about. We talked about sports and children and favorite TV shows and got along real well. And I don’t know it felt nice I guess to just talk to someone who knew what I did and it just be a normal conversation. I mean (laughs) when I tell the story now it seems fairly insignificant but I kind of think that cup of coffee saved my life...or like it was like that term you used earlier...a tipping point...in me going in the right direction because I felt like okay you know maybe I don’t have to just be friends with burnouts and strippers the rest of my life...maybe a businessman wants to hear what I say.
Mini’s story is significant because it illustrates a point where she did not feel the need to lean toward minstrelization or activism, or even manage her personal identity, despite the fact that her stigma was disclosed in full. My interview with Mini was the shortest one I had lasting only about 18 minutes. She seems incredibly uncomfortable with the interview setting and is reluctant to go in-depth on any answer. When I ask her why she likes the group, she simply says “well because I feel like we make a difference, or at least we make a difference for me.”

*I See Their Ticks...It Is Kind Of Like Playing Poker: Cammie Camel*

Another strategy used by ex-offenders in CPA is to minimize the value of free-worlders and perceivers, which gives the ex-offender a degree of confidence that goes a long way toward changing the reflection in the looking-glass self. Cammie Camel smokes more than any person I have ever met. I once had a conversation with her during a break at one of the meetings and she smoked 11 cigarettes in a period of 45 minutes. In addition, she will leave at least twice during the meetings before break and after break to smoke. The majority of CPA members smoke, so I took to occasionally smoking with them to make it easier to gain entry into the group during informal meeting times. Cammie is a white woman in her late 30’s who spent time in prison twice for stealing large sums of money from boyfriends. At a planning meeting at her house I noticed that she has a diploma from a major university, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree in political science. Cammie is very intelligent and mildly successful, she owns her own business, which she runs out of her home. She predates me by about six months in the group and is an active member.
Cammie is another combative member of the group, but unlike Paris who prefers to yell at free worlders, Cammie prefers to take their arguments apart and “make them feel ridiculous.” I spent part of a Thursday night at her house in the second year of my data collection. Cammie, Mandy, Brady and I were putting together a copy of the CPA newsletter. The newsletter is sent to roughly 500 people. Not too far into the session, Mandy (a free worlder) suggests that prison staff should be allowed to read mail between inmates and outstiders. Cammie is angered greatly. The following is a rough approximation of the conversation that takes place:

CC: *Let me ask you, have you ever had someone that has power over you read your mail and then bring up parts of the mail as jokes?*

M: No

CC: *Have you ever had a superior tell your colleagues things they read in your they can then use against you or use to hurt you?*

M: No

CC: *Have you ever had a superior take a picture from your mail and tell you that it is so they can bring it home with them and jack off to it?*

M: No

CC: *Do you think that if they don’t read mail they are going to be missing out on all sorts of murder confessions and prison escape plans?*

M: *Probably not but…*

CC: *Maybe you should try to talk about things that you have a fucking clue about.*

M: *(very offended) fine…so sorry.*
This is not an uncommon interaction between Cammie and other members of CPA, especially free worlders. She is probably one of the most intelligent person in the group and she likes to demonstrate this on regular occasions.

In our interview, I was interested in knowing why Cammie would stay in a group that achieves very few goals when she has so much going for her. This interview was among the most challenging because Cammie’s work involves market research interviews so she has a sense of how questions are formed and what questions are attempting to determine. I asked what she gets out of being in the group and her response is:

*Look, I mean I like the meetings, I like most of the people in the group and I feel like the group has a good heart. I don’t really get to talk about these issues much and there are other groups I could join but they just seem like a larger commitment. I feel like I can have some level of control in this group.*

This is not unlike the “not as crazy” redemption script in that she sets herself up as superior to others in the group and acknowledges at some level, the group is unsuccessful. I ask her about her conflicts with free worlders and she says:

*Well..(laugh) look I mean no offense but I am just not that impressed by any of you and I just kind of think your opinions are less valid than mine. I feel like a lot of the group sucks up to people who weren’t in prison and think you are so smart and nice for doing this but I just don’t feel like sucking up like that. You guys just aren’t that impressive to me and in a way I guess that makes me realize how unimpressive people are in general.*

Cammie becomes head of CPA right before I stop attending meetings. For her, the benefits of free worlder interaction is that she can consistently remind herself of her belief that perceivers are not smart and do not have an advantage over her. This allows her to be a bit more militant in her public scripts than some of the members and allows her to consistently counter mainstream justification ideologies.
**A FINAL NOTE ON REDEMPTION SCRIPTS**

I demonstrate the need to consider redemption scripts not just at the internal level as Maruna does, but at the interactional level as well. Prior research has demonstrated the importance and worth of redemption scripts, but fails to consider how they are formed. My work demonstrates the value of social movement membership for individuals who may lack access to rituals of redemption elsewhere in their lives. My data indicate that ex-offenders can use group membership as a vehicle for the formation of viable redemption scripts either by using other ex-offenders troubles as a comparison, or by using interaction with free worlders as a test run for public displays of personal and ego identity.

**REDEMPTIVE CONTESTATION**

A second prominent form of stigma management that emerges from my research I term *redemptive contestation scripts*. Redemption scripts have been discussed quite frequently in this project and can be understood as scripts that rely on the individual seeing herself as the cause of her problems. Therefore, parts of the self must be identified that lead the person toward some form of salvation. By contrast, contestation, as a frame, can be understood as an attempt to call into question some use of power. In this section, I discuss how CPA members use contestation as an avenue to redemption.

The strategies used by CPA that seem to be geared toward maintaining membership have the effect (possibly unintended) of inducing members into
understanding contestation as a manner in which redemption can be attained. CPA relies on a mass of appeals (discussed in Chapter 3) geared toward bringing in as many persons as possible. The primary appeal used by CPA in public demonstrations and political interactions is one of reform. The reform appeal used by CPA primarily consists of legislative lobbying attempts to change the treatment of prisoners and rights restrictions placed upon ex-offenders. As an appeal this brings in a number of people. I would estimate that on average 4-5 prospective members come to each meeting, although the vast majority of them do not return for more meetings. I attribute this retention problem to the poor traditional movement structure of CPA discussed earlier and to the fact that meetings often have little to do with reform appeals. Individuals that stay in CPA typically are drawn in by the reform frames and those frames that contest the state. Well over half of most meetings are focused on formal and informal contestations of state power. For a number of group members there is a liberating quality to contestation frames. In this section, I will highlight the nine individuals who exhibit qualities consistent with a redemptive contestation effect. These individuals are discussed in groupings with their specific scripts.

I Finally See the Light- Secular Religion

At their core, most of the persons I interview seem broken by the process of being in and exiting prison. While physical abuse is not a typical part of the criminal justice
process, intensive labeling apparently has a coercive and disempowering effect on ex-offenders. Interviewees discussed their times in prison essentially as training in mainstream justification ideologies. Primarily inmates and ex-offenders are trained to think of themselves as bad individuals, members of a dangerous class. One effect of prison for the people that I interviewed is the internalized message that they are not separate from the crimes they commit. In social movements, seeing the light is about recognizing ways that social systems work that are not previously understood. One effect of CPA is that it allows many of its members to “see the light.”

Now I Know Why Everyone Is So Mean To Me: Randi And Fausto

One form of redemptive contestation is a politicized form of out-group alignment that is focused on the process of normalizing individuals. Often times in meetings a discussion will occur about fear of ex-offenders and all of the factors that go into the general stigma against ex-offenders. Some members of CPA use frames that contest the state’s role in maintaining stigma against ex-offenders as a way of understanding out-group members’ (perceivers) fears as resulting from structural factors as opposed to internal contempt.

Randi is a young white female who would not disclose her age to me. She has been in prison once for drug possession and has twice spent time in jail for prostitution. She is another quiet member of the group not often speaking although she regularly attends meetings and occasionally comes to functions. One day during a meeting, Dahlia takes the group off topic to ask if members have seen the TV show Prison Break. Discussion ensues about the reality of the show. This leads into a half hour discussion on
television depictions of crime and punishment. Randi speaks out about the depiction of prostitution on television; “like every time a prostitute is on a TV show she is addicted to drugs and stupid, and has like this horrible background story and like, it’s just all messed up, it’s like no wonder people think that I am a skank and a scumbug when they see me.” Randi tells me that when she started participating in CPA she was really angry about how people respond to ex-offenders. She tells me a very unfortunate story:

_I worked at this restaurant last year and my boss knew what I had been arrested for and so he would always get me to close with him and so we were the only ones there, so this one night he tried to get me to have sex with him and I was like no and he said that he would give me less hours if I would let him fuck me and I was like NO. Then he called me a ‘fucking whore’ and told me to get out and then like I was getting less and less shifts until I finally just quit because I wasn’t making enough money._

I ask her why she is no longer mad, and she says: “I mean I’m still mad when people treat me like shit but (long pause) I guess that I have just started to realize that people don’t have as much control over how they treat us as I think they do. Everywhere you look someone like me is being shown as trash; I would hate me if I wasn’t me.” Normally we attribute undesirable actions of those we see as different than us (out-group) as internal (Crandall 2003; Crittendon 1983). In other words we assume that people who are different from us do bad things because they are bad people. Randi uses the contestation frames of CPA meetings to identify perceivers’ stigma as learned instead of internal. She states “yeah, I don’t know, since being in this group I feel like I just understand the problem better and it kind of helps me relate to people better.” CPA allows Randi to practice understanding.

Fausto is a 27 year old immigrant from a country in South America who still speaks with a slight accent. He spent 18 months in prison for his third theft arrest; it was
his first time in prison. He joined the group because someone he met in prison told him to join the group. He has barely ever spoken at meetings but regularly attends and occasionally will work for group functions outside of the meetings. I had barely spoken to him in the year and half that we were both members of CPA when we had our interview. I ask him why he does not talk much during the meetings and he responds “I don’t know, I mean the people they are smart enough without my help, I feel like a lot of the conversations are (laughs) a little bit out of my range. I just like to listen.” Fausto said that he wanted to be part of the group because he felt that he deserved to go to prison but then was mistreated by the system. At one point in the interview he says:

Yeah, I mean you know when I went to prison I thought to myself you know, you know...like maybe this is a good thing, maybe I need to be in prison and think over some things but I just, I think that prison made me worse because I am so angry now because basically I got treated like a dog and then thrown out to fend for myself. It made me dumber and I have a harder time now than I did before and its like, I feel like I am worse off than when I was stealing. I kind of wanted help and it got worse.

When I ask him if he thinks the group is successful, his answer seems very uncritical, he states “well you are here, you can see all the great stuff that we do.” He goes on to say that his favorite part though is just listening to people talk about all of the ways that the prison system fails and keeps people down.

Over the three years that I observed Fausto he seemed to become more and more comfortable with his life as he realized that he is not the only person that has been mistreated by the system or for whom the system has failed. I ask him why he likes to hear so much about the failures of the prison system. He says “I mean I guess I just think that like, ha, I don’t know like this might sound kind of sick but it is nice to know that other people have gone through the same stuff I did; like now I just kind of think that it
“all sucks instead of just sucking for me, so maybe, like Jeni calls it closure.” He is referring to a free worlder in the group that I never had a chance to interview. Fausto feels liberated by the fact that his disadvantage is structural as opposed to individual, a realization that he believes is a result of work in CPA. His success, in part, can be attributed to his knowledge that there are certain irregularities in the system that he cannot blame on himself.

This Is My Kind Of Religion: Vitamin C, Brady, And Jolene

Where Randi and Fausto find peace in contestation scripts and therefore can adapt and develop their redemption scripts in an informed manner, other members use contestation as the motivation for redemption. In Nike Culutre, Goldman and Papson (2002) argue that people are attracted to secular religion as we become more individualized. Many members of CPA use contestation to form the state’s role toward prisoners as one of devil, designed to tempt them back into bad behavior. A clique formed in CPA best illustrates this concept of secular religion.

Many members of the group seem slightly annoyed by Vitamin C, Brady, and Jolene because they are always together. The three of them drive to and from meetings together, will volunteer for CPA assignments together, always want to work on the same shift as each other at events, and are inseparable at breaks. They also have a series of inside jokes and occasionally talk during meetings. I had fairly short interviews with each of them during my fieldwork; however, the most significant information came when I had a chance to work with the three of them during a late night planning meeting. All three are white, and in their mid-20’s. Vitamin C has orange hair and is incredibly pale, she
does not provide information on the reason she went to prison but simply tells me that she has some anger issues. Brady is a short, well built male who went to prison for statutory rape. Jolene is a very tall blonde woman who sings constantly during breaks and while doing work; she went to prison for drug possession. The three of them are pleasant to talk with but seem younger than they actually are; their immaturity contributes to some of the other members of the group disliking them. Despite their isolation they are three of the most consistent participants within the group and are often willing to help with group activities.

On a Sunday night in November 2007 a number of CPA members went to Trishelle’s house to stuff packets that were being sent to politicians and criminal justice officials. The majority of the materials come from the national headquarters for CPA, but each state chapter was instructed to put together materials specific to their own state. At this meeting we are putting together packets and then stuffing and stamping the envelopes. I spend four hours at a table with Vitamin C, Brady and Jolene and talk to them about CPA. When I ask how they like CPA they all enthusiastically endorse the group. Vitamin C says “yeah, this is my type of religion.” Intrigued, I ask her to explain what she means by religion. Jolene answers the question saying “well like we all hate religion so we always talk about how this is our religion because like all the characters are there and we have like a heaven and a hell and a devil and all of that.” It is rare to get such direct application of theory to experience but it is clear that this is something the three of them have talked about before. I ask Brady if he agrees with the two of them, and he says, “well, I mean I don’t really think of it as a religion but it kind of is I guess; I
certainly feel like participating in this group is spiritual in a way.” Vitamin C and Jolene nod in agreement when Brady uses the word spiritual.

All three CPA members went on parole when leaving prison and Brady is a registered sex offender; parole is given as the reason they joined CPA and found religion. Vitamin C states, “parole just was horrible because, well...yeah, because you get out of prison and you want to not go back...and I mean I wanted to like do well for myself and be okay and all parole ended up being was like an angry parent sort of thing. You know, they are mean to you, they don’t help you find a job or a place to go, they are just hassling you whenever they can.” Brady adds “When I met my P.O. he was just such a fucking asshole, lecturing me about how I better not fuck up and he will check on me so I shouldn’t think I can get away with stuff and I just wanted to say ‘you know man, I am on parole because I did a good job in prison...they let me out early because I am a good guy’...its like he was going to get off on me screwing up and him you know getting to bust me.” I ask Jolene where the religion comes into this equation and she states very poignantly

*I think that we were just relying on the state to do something for us or waiting for someone to do something for us, and I guess being part of CPA made us realize that the state isn’t going to do anything to help us make it, in fact the state is like taunting us like a devil that wants us to fail. Once I realized that, it’s almost like crime is a new form of sin because its what the system wants me to do and I hate the system so I don’t want to do what it wants me to do. I want to fight sin and I want to fight the state and show it that I can take care of myself. I think it motivates me to save myself, makes me realize that I am the only thing between me and succeeding. So, I like, I just stop worrying about what other people think about what I did and just focus on living the life that that I feel my p.o. and some of the people I knew in prison don’t think I can have. It’s strange because its almost like being part of the group, staying clean, and trying to help people is like taunting the state...like ‘haha...I made it no thanks to you.*
The three of them stick together for the entirety of the time that I work with CPA, they manage to keep stable jobs, are very comfortable talking with people, and have formed a mini group that polices each other. In their case, the pathway to redemption comes from the ritual of holding the state accountable, something they mutually reinforce.

This is My Kind of Liberation Theology: Kaya

While the clique establishes stigma management scripts by using CPA frames to establish a spiritual journey, others in CPA use contestation to establish a form of liberation theology. Kaya is one of the first members of CPA that I meet. Kaya is from Hawaii and talks about it quite a bit. He wears Hawaiian shirts to nearly every meeting and clearly attempts to put forth a very laid back performance when not interacting on the issue of criminal justice. He is a nice looking, charismatic guy that people gravitate toward. He is interested in participating in a number of groups outside of CPA as well. He is one of the only people in the group who was a member of CPA while he was in prison. He says “yeah man, one of my buddies in prison set me up with CPA and I started getting their newsletter and I was like this is alright man (big laugh)...I mean I never really thought so much about what I was doing in prison or like what it meant or anything and I was like you know these guys are pretty intense and I think I like it you know?” Kaya tells me that he was in prison twice, once for gun possession, and then a second time for bank robbery; in all he has spent 12 years of his life in prison.

Kaya’s exit from prison left him in a difficult situation because he was no longer attached to his family and most of his friends had moved on to more legitimate lifestyles. He states:
Ten years is a lot of time to spend in prison, I didn’t really have much family in the area you know they are all back in Hawaii, and like the guys I used to hang out with, I lost touch with them, and so you know I get out and I’m 10 years older but my life stood still. You know? And I wasn’t really interested in getting back in the whole getting arrested game but I didn’t really know what to do. You know, I mean there are all these jobs I can’t have and people I can’t talk to and I didn’t even have a P.O. so I didn’t even have someone to talk to...haha...or yell at me and I got to this point where I am working some dead end job, living in you know, like the YMCA, and I realize (laughs heavy) ‘holy shit, no one is going to fucking help me.’

Kaya believes that had it not been for CPA he likely would have fallen prey to addiction and ended up going back to violent crime. Instead, Kaya is among the most ambitious people I encounter during my three years of observation. He is involved in two other prison groups, writes his own newsletter and has spoken in two hearings of the state House of Representatives. When I ask him how CPA has helped him, he says: “well you know, it was just like a slap in the face that I got to be the man who creates justice. Man, the system is fucked up and like who is going to fix it if I am not going to?” Kaya too has established the message of contestation, as used by CPA as a means to redemption. Kaya regularly speaks in the group about his beliefs that inequality and poor treatment by the government is what led him to commit crime in the first place and is what made it so difficult for him to escape crime. As opposed to Vitamin C, Brady, and Jolene, Kaya finds his redemption not only in proving the system wrong, but also in attempting to fight the system and change it for the better.

_Final Thoughts on Seeing the Light_

Toch (1965) argues that to maintain membership, organizations will often use frames that are designed to exploit the needs of social movement participants. My
research indicates that this exploitation can benefit the social movement because the frames help maintain viability but also has a benefit for movement membership in that the frames contribute to identity construction. As detailed in earlier chapters, CPA takes very little action in terms of reform or contestation. However, group discussions and attempts at action, geared toward contestation, has the effect of giving many of CPA’s members the ability to find pathways to redemption that may not be found outside of social movement participation.

*Now I Know the Enemy*

While *Seeing the Light* allows some members to find pathways to self-fulfillment, for other group participants, contestation is a means for redemption that is based primarily in vengeance. Members of what I term *Knowing the Enemy* take contestation frames and turn them into more militant revolutionary ideas, as opposed to the reform based initiatives typically proposed by those members primarily categorized as *Seeing the Light*.

*A Young Soldier For Justice: Jacqui*

Jacqui, a young Latino woman, becomes a member of CPA almost exactly one year after I join the group. At 20 years old she is far and away the youngest consistent participant in the group and also one of the more active. Jacqui spent a little over a year
in prison for physically assaulting a police officer. In our interview, which she called me
to request, she explains:

_There was this group of cops that would just always come around and harass me
and my friends...and I mean for nothing at all...all we did was hang out around
the neighborhood, but like they would get out of their cars and make us stand
against the wall and search us or they would make us keep moving. Sometimes
they would make us go in different directions...like wouldn’t fucking let us hang
out together or anything ...and then so one day they come up and my cousin
Carlos is just tired of it and starts getting up in the cop’s face and mouthing off to
him and pointing at him and this cop pushes him into the wall and starts to arrest
him. I just fucking lost it and I run up and tackle the cop and start like scratching
his face up and like I don’t even remember everything I did...so yeah I got
arrested and like they made it sound like we were these bad kids...but like really
we just got pushed too far._

There is no way for me to assess the accuracy of her account, but it is clear that Jacqui
perceives bias to be a major element of her incarceration. In addition, she has an extreme
distrust of police officers. She is also incredibly bitter about the situation because she
missed a year of community college and has ambitions to be a lawyer, a dream she now
feels is in jeopardy.

Jacqui seems genuinely excited by all of the CPA meetings. She talks to other
people in the group about their experiences in prison and it is clear that she feels like she
was wronged and likes to hear stories about problems with the system. She seems to
especially like talking with Trotter, Dizzee, Darrell and Deuce who all take a very
intellectual approach to the criminal justice system. Her anger becomes clear when she
attends a meeting for a community corrections group in central Ohio. She drives with
Betsy and me to the event which will be attended by a number of police officers and
correction officers. At the event, we will sit in a circle and encounter two people who are about to leave prison, and help them figure out a plan of action. Jacqui asks Betsy a number of questions about the group, all of them geared toward whether the cops seem to have “an attitude” the other times Betsy has gone to these events. When we sit in the circle at the event, Jacqui raises her hand a few questions in and tells the first inmate that he should not feel like he needs to listen to everything these people tell him to do and that he should figure out what is best for himself and not let these people bully him. This creates an awkward environment and she is asked not to participate in the circle for the second inmate. I volunteer to join her outside during the second event, while Betsy participates, and talk to her a bit about the event. She says “yeah, you know I have met people like this before, and they think they know what is going on but they don’t know anything, they are part of the reason that those guys are in prison right now.” In our interview, I ask Jacqui why she is so interested in going to law school when she seems to lack so much respect for the legal system. Her answer reveals a great deal about what motivates her to succeed and in what ways CPA helps her:

   Well, before I think I wanted to go because I thought that I could help people and that it was just like a good thing to be a lawyer; but now....like if I am being honest....I kind of want to be a lawyer so that I can be the government’s worst nightmare. Like I am sorry but I just hate the government now I really do. I feel like I was pushed to do what I did and I feel like prison just left me worse off, and I feel like politicians could care less about me and I feel like that I have CPA to thank for helping me realize that. I could totally see myself just giving up when I got out and just thinking that I couldn’t win and that there was no point but like when I started to be part of this movement I just felt like wow, this is what I am talking about, this is what I want to do. So like my dream is to be part of the system so that I can take it down, fight for justice and blow up the system and all.
For the remainder of the time that I worked with CPA Jacqui continued to go to meetings, work for a non-profit organization and maintain a 3.6 GPA at a community college in southwest Ohio. Her internalization of CPA messages of contestation allow her to strive toward redemption. She is willing to follow the rules because she finds it to be the most effective way of destroying the rules.

_Criminal Identity Politics: Dzee And Darrell_

Dizzee and Darrell might be the most interesting people in the entire group. They are African American males in their early 30’s that have made the conscious decision to “look like criminals.” Dizzee embraces an intimidating Rasta style wearing dreadlocks, bright colored tanktops and baggy jeans. He has a few facial piercings and for the vast majority of time that I was part of the group he wore stormy grey contacts that made him look non-human. He has an M.A. in political science and is very engaged in political issues. He spends the vast majority of time at the meetings with Darrell. Darrell is a sex offender who takes on more of a street style of clothing, typically wearing backwards hats, very baggy jeans, and football jerseys. He has a degree in social work and works at a homeless shelter in Northern Ohio. The two of them regularly participate in meetings but, for the most part, they only discuss why an idea is wrong or unrealistic. Both indicate a serious distrust of the government and take a fairly militant stance regarding ex-offenders. Darrell and Dizzee both refer to inmates as prisoners of war and Darrell once described the reentry process as “being dropped behind enemy lines.” The two of them
refuse to work on initiatives that involve any government interaction and argue that it is impossible for ex-offenders to find any degree of salvation if they remain connected to the state.

They agree to do a formal interview, but only if they can do it together. When I ask why they stay in CPA when they seem to feel as though many of the ideas from members are poor, Dizzee says “Well, I mean, I think that this just kind of keeps me active and it keeps my mind active on these issues.” Darrell adds “and I mean its not like we do nothing, there is some stuff we do that I am on board with, but its like this is the only sort of organization in Ohio where you can you know, that is like respectable at all, that allows you to kind of say some crazy stuff and like, people will listen, I mean I guess its something.” Dizzee also mentions “and they don’t take any state funding...thank you.” The two men are for the most part reserved but when they speak their minds they are very intimidating and will use their size and appearance to force a point on occasion. Dizzee once walked up to D-Wayne and used physical intimidation to get him to stop complaining about something during one of the meetings. I ask if they are aware of how intimidating they are for some of the group members and it is clear that they are aware, and that they attempt to take advantage of this quality. Darrell says:

Yeah we like looking scary, cuz we ain’t going to do anything to you so being scared...that’s a you problem, not a me problem...you know, that’s a you problem. It’s like I am not going to change who I am just to fit into some sort of idea of what someone is supposed to be like when they are done with prison..you know, okay, I am going to stop raping people.....but I don’t need to change anything else about myself...I ain’t getting anything back in return.
Here, Darrell is using contestation in a fatalistic way, assuming that there is no way for the state to ever help. Dizzee and Darrell both admit to leaning toward anarchy as their ideal political system. They use contestation scripts to become liberated from the state. However, as opposed to someone like Jacqui, Dizzee and Darrell choose redemption to escape from the state, not to fight the state. CPA allows the two of them to keep their minds actively considering their reasons for withdrawing from the state.

**PARRHESIA: TRUTH TELLING AND JUSTICE IN CPA**

In addition to redemption scripts and redemptive contestation scripts, CPA members use a third form of stigma management similar to Foucault’s perspective on the Socratic practice of Parrhesia. As a reminder, parrhesia focuses on individuals becoming actively engaged in the process of giving a self-account. Persons using this form of stigma management regularly explore their conceptualization of ideas such as courage, justice, and virtue. Justice is an especially important concept for many of the members of CPA. What these concepts create is social space for persons to reveal the nature of the relationship between his or her behavior and his or her propounded belief.

In *parrhesia*, there is a dedication to understanding and creating the self; *parrhesia* functions as a type of physical or regular checkup, to make sure that the mind is functioning as it should (Foucault 2001). *Parrhesia* draws attention to the disjuncture between one’s rational discourse and the way that one lives in practice. *Parrhesia* reveals ignorance of this disjuncture, and thereby helps to correct and diagnose the problem
while simultaneously modeling a path which creates a more meaningful commitment to one’s beliefs and to the continual development of those beliefs. Goffman’s model does not take into account how one actually evades stigmatizable behavior as opposed to simply status. When discussing in-group alignment, Goffman indicates that avoidance or control of stigma is the goal of most or all targets (1961). Foucault’s conception of *parrhesia* goes beyond this to argue that targets engaging in *parrhesia* are gaining control of stigma, reducing their own stigmatizable behavior, and potentially redrawing the lines on what could be considered stigmatizable behavior. This is the most that can be expected of a relatively powerless target in a system controlled by stigmatizing discourse (Foucault 1966; Foucault 2001). In discussing what *parrhesia* looks like in practice, I hope to elevate the use of Fearless Speech as a form of stigma management that complements Goffman’s understanding of the stigma management process.

*It’s A Hard Knock Life: Deuce*

Of all the regular members of CPA, Deuce is far and away the roughest seeming. He is a stalky, African American male that played running back for a few years in high school. During the winter he consistently wears a leather trench coat and a leather golf hat. He likes to smoke inexpensive cigars that come in two packs and can be purchased in convenience stores. When he does not have those with him, he refuses offers of cigarettes from other members. He comes to most meetings although he occasionally misses with no explanation (at one point he seemed to vanish for two months) and participates in
most movement activities. He has a G.E.D. now and has been working at a store that specializes in gardening needs. In his early 30’s, he tells me that he has spent around 11 years in prison all together for a number of activities that relate to gang behavior and drug possession. He first learned about CPA when he received the group’s newsletter while he was incarcerated.

Deuce likes to critically evaluate actions of CPA consistently asking how and why the group plans to do things. He is very interested in whether or not CPA is consistently putting its best foot forward to get towards what he calls equality, although his definition seems more in line with the concept of justice. In one meeting, when we are discussing an idea to lobby for better access to things like shaving cream and toothpaste in prison, Deuce says:

_ I mean I would have liked all that stuff when I was in prison but I just feel like that is kind of a band-aid you know...I mean, I just feel like if we are trying to figure out the best way to spend our time shouldn’t we be thinking about things that will help inmates and people on the out to be more political, to be more aware?...You know like to figure out how to change their lives for the better and be the person they want to be? You know since like they aren’t going to get any help with that from anywhere else._

This is a fairly typical comment from Deuce, he is often concerned with whether or not CPA has a clear idea of what it wants to do, and is doing something consistent with that goal. In the second year that I observed the group, he nearly gets into a fist fight with a short-lived member that I call What!? What!? Deuce is questioning What!? What!?’s defeatist attitude toward reentry during a break. Deuce is asking challenging questions about whether or not What!? What!? is being consistent with his positions. The questions eventually leave What!? What!? feeling vulnerable and he attempts to initiate a fight with
Deuce by him bumping in the chest. Deuce does not back down but shows no interest in fighting, which is consistent with his behavior throughout the years that I observe him. He seems more than anyone else in the group to stress consistency in thought and action.

Deuce was the last interview that I conduct in part because I just did not know the best way to approach him in the interview. I also was not sure I believed that he would stay out of prison. After 2 years of membership I approached him for an interview and he obliged. When I ask what do you think has made a difference this time he says:

Yeah okay...hmm...yeah well I have talked to you a little about this but yeah...so I am 29, I am in prison for the 3rd time, and I meet this young buck inside, he is like 19 I think, and he is basically just like me at that age, stupid and cocky. He clearly isn’t focused on making his life better, or figuring his shit out...he isn’t like looking at himself in the mirror and thinking about what he wants to do with himself. And I start like kind of judging him and all and thinking he’s all stupid and all and then it hits me that I am 29 and basically still the same fucking way, like that I don’t have any idea what I am going to do...see like basically everyone I knew was trouble or just didn’t really care, you know what I’m saying and like I realize that when I leave there is no fucking reason to believe that I won’t be back soon like a lot of these other guys I see in here. And then it just kind of like, I don’t know man...it like hits me hard, like a truck or something. It hits me that like I can’t have all these strong feelings about how I’ve been done wrong and how you know I am a good little nigga that people just don’t understand, if I don’t follow that up with actions, follow that up with what I do...and I started talking to one of the ministers a lot and he told me this quote from Gandhi that’s like ‘Be the Change that You Want in the World’ and I don’t know that just like stuck with me. And so I started like trying to get more active and I like read someone else’s CPA newsletter and I was like yeah, this is the sort of stuff I care about...so when I got out like one of the first things I did was go to a meeting and try to start helping.

This story, which I have heard him talk about at different times illustrates the mindset that Deuce displayed throughout the time that I knew him, the desire to be consistent and live the life that he wants to live. Deuce is not religious; in fact, he is typically quite critical when people bring up religion at meetings: “I just think that like religion is too easy of an answer, like I almost think of religion as a cop out because people can just
kind of do whatever they want and then ask for forgiveness and say that they got it. I just, I don’t know, I guess I feel like I would rather be accountable to myself and my concept of equality, and what being good means.” Deuce feels that finding some sense of truth and then using that as the measuring stick by which to judge himself is the proper way to stay straight.

He has taken a number of steps since leaving prison that have helped him to be the person that he wants to be. He took a job and has decided that he wants to stay with it, no matter what, for five years and see how far he can go. He set up a retirement account to which he is able to contribute very little each year, but he says even a little bit reminds him that he should always be thinking about the future in addition to the present. Also, he moved into a very small efficiency apartment in a middle-class neighborhood near Ohio State’s campus. He said that he decided to “move where there are a bunch of preppy white people; I just wanted to be able to get away from trouble, but be in an environment that reminded me how important it is to be real.” He doesn’t identify white people as being better in any way. In fact, this is really a contestation of whites because he is identifying them as fake and less interested in issues of equality. When discussing CPA, he says: “I think a big reason that I like it is because like I pretty much agree with everything they say and they want to do, and nobody’s perfect, so a lot of times working with them reminds me of who I want to be and maybe sometimes I can help them remember who they want to be.” Deuce has identified CPA as a parrhesiastes, an entity that helps keep his thoughts on truth and justice in line. In turn, this helps him to be true to himself and stay out of trouble.
We’ll Be Those Girls: Alana And Tawanda

Alana and Tawanda are Latina sisters that were both in prison for three years for gang related activities, most specifically aggravated assault. Alana is 27 and Tawanda is 25. They are with CPA for the last 18 months that I am there and seem to build confidence as they go to more meetings and events. They share an apartment with one other woman they know in a neighborhood in northern Columbus. Alana is working part time at a convenience store while attending a community college and Tawanda is working full time as a server at a restaurant that a friend owns. They both have ambitions for what they want to do with their lives. Alana hopes to do social work and Tawanda would like to eventually be an assistant manager at her place of work and maybe some day open up her own restaurant.

Alana and Tawanda also ask to do a joint interview. Overall they have a fairly traditional story that affirms a basic rational choice approach to crime. When I ask them why they are doing so well compared to before their imprisonment, Tawanda answers “Cause prison sucks!” They both laugh and then Alana says; “well, I think neither of us wanted to go back and I think that maybe knowing what the other one was going through at the same time made it easier for us to kind of accept that we made bad choices and that like we weren’t going to do this.” Tawanda adds “and I think that we both want to like get married and have children some day...and like (laughs) ...I can’t speak for my sister on this but like a lot of the women in prison aren’t exactly role models for us (laughs); it was kind of like looking into a really disgusting future.” “Oh hell yeah” adds Alana, “I didn’t want to be anything like those people.” Alana and Tawanda clearly
developed a sense in prison that they were not like other people in prison, that they had the ability to be special. However they admit that it is very difficult to exit prison in part because to follow their plans they had to make a decision to abandon most of their friends and even most of their family. “We kind of had to make a commitment to each other that it can’t just be talk, it has to be something real and so there is a lot of pressure for us to be friends to each other and not abandon each other and get onto the other when we seem to be getting lazy or want to go hang out with friends, or things of that nature” says Alana. Tawanda adds that “Being part of CPA I think has helped inspire us though. Like when I think about their message and the things we do there...like I think that it helps both of us realize what we want to be, and like we talk a ton about things we wouldn’t normally like why were we in prison, why don’t prisons help us more and stuff like that.” These sisters serve as parrhesiates to each other but also use CPA’s organizational frames as a check on their speech.

_Can’t Make Me A Bad Person: Clara Sue_

When I ask Clara Sue her age she says “I don’t see why that matters, I’m the oldest aren’t I?” Clara Sue is a white woman who is likely around 65 or 70 years old. She spent 20 years in prison for murder. Earlier in her life she was in and out of jail over 15 times for drug use, prostitution, and theft. She has been out of prison for 20 years when I meet her. She has been a member of the group a year longer than I and said that she decided to join the group again when her grandson was placed in prison for rape. She is a fairly active member although one of the least effective because she tends to have problems keeping up with the conversations and being effective at group activities. She
lives in a small town an hour and a half outside of Columbus and does not have a car.

Thus she relies on Betsy to pick her up on her way into town.

While most of the members seem to understand that I am doing research, Clara Sue seems to believe that my project is unimportant. She says “well I guess that you can talk to me if you want, I don’t really see the point of it, but okay.” We only speak about 30 minutes and she doesn’t really have much to say about a number of my questions. She speaks the most when it comes to her decision to join and stay with CPA. In this extended passage that took her nearly three minutes to speak, we get a sense of how Clara Sue uses CPA membership to test her identity and to do what she wants to do with her life. She states:

Well, I was out of prison for a long time before I joined CPA and um...I spent a long time in prison. I got out of prison when I was 50 years old, you know, and that’s pretty much a life you know, its hard to figure out how to recreate yourself. And you know, town X, where I live, well everyone knows me, and my family, and sons and what I did and so here I am years and years from it and I am...um...still that person who did that stuff and all...it bothered me, a lot, because I see people in that town who have done a lot of stuff just as bad as me but never got in trouble for it..well but I’m the one with the life that’s gone, and that just never seemed right but I just kept my mouth shut and got treated like I had a disease for decades. I believed it was wrong but just didn’t say anything. And then Bobby, my grandson, gets arrested for supposedly raping some girl and then he goes to prison and I felt like it might have partially been my fault, which doesn’t make any sense but, well yeah, my fault. Because I could have been more active and been a stronger person and talked to them or something, and so I just decided that I wanted to do something about it; I wanted to use my experience and the things I have to offer and I don’t know try to help because all I was doing was a whole lot of nothing. So that’s why I’m here because I feel like this is the sort of thing that I should be doing.

Clara Sue didn’t really get into any trouble after her prison sentence, in part because she is old enough that those factors that might lead her to further criminality have disappeared. Thus, while she no longer commits crime she is still heavily impacted by the
stigma of her crime, especially because the area in which she lives is so small. The situation that her grandchild found himself in helped Clara realize that she was not being the person that she wanted to be and so CPA becomes a way of making her feel more like the person that she wants to be, which she hopes will make her happier. She is using CPA as a check on her action, encouraging her to explore what justice actually means.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I demonstrate the value that social movement participation can have in forming successful stigma management scripts. The persons in CPA with high organizational affiliation and successful stigma management are more likely to live alone, have low paying jobs, and lack other factors linked to successful reentry. The rituals these members perform in CPA provide them with a foundation upon which successful stigma management scripts can be formed and sustained. Consistent with Toch’s (1965) arguments concerning the self-interested nature of social movement participation, these ex-offenders stay in the group because of the value they perceive comes from the topics discussed during meetings and CPA actions. While these individuals may be concerned with the governmental and inter-organizational dynamics of CPA, the individual and familial mandates of CPA take precedent.

There are three stigma management scripts that are formed within CPA. These scripts emerge from the specific past experience of the ex-offenders and range from more traditional forms of redemption to more non-traditional forms of fearless speech. First, CPA membership facilitates innovative forms of redemption scripts. Specifically, members are able to use the composition of membership to understand themselves in a
more positive light. Second, CPA membership facilitates scripts that control
condemnation scripts by using contestation frames in combination with redemption
scripts. With condemnation/contestation scripts, members are able to use aggressive anti-
state discourse and internal framing as motivation to find redemption. Members find this
redemption by either: (a) using contestation frames to better understand that the state will
not provide support toward their redemption; or (b) using contestation frames as
motivation to beat the state. Third, CPA allows members to form a truthful identity that I
relate to Foucault’s understanding of Socratic parrhesia. Specifically, members use
CPA’s internal and external frames as reminders and drivers of their own already
established social justice goals. In the next chapter, I explore individuals with high levels
of affiliation that fail to successfully manage stigma, individuals with low affiliation that
fail to manage stigma well, and individuals with low levels of affiliation but that
successfully manage stigm
Chapter 7:  
The Other Members

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 6, I discussed the various successful stigma management scripts that consistent CPA memberships facilitate for 18 members of the social movement organization. However, not all members of CPA have consistent membership or successful stigma management scripts. In this chapter, I highlight the members of CPA that exhibit characteristics outside the modal outcome of Chapter 6.

What follows is an explanation of three different categories of individuals in CPA. In this research I consider the intersection of movement participation and stigma management. First, I discuss the three individuals that have limited to no participation in CPA but manage to successfully desist and manage stigma. Second, I explain the seven individuals that have limited to no participation in CPA and generally fail to achieve mainstream success. Third, and finally, I examine the five individuals in CPA that have consistent and active affiliation with CPA yet fail to properly manage stigma.
WHY ARE YOU DOING SO WELL? LOW AFFILIATION AND SUCCESSFUL STIGMA MANAGEMENT

Sampling in a section on persons with low affiliation and successful stigma management is problematic because the three persons represented in this sample are three of the millions of people that successfully manage stigma while having little or no affiliation with CPA. These individuals are highlighted in figure 4. An assumption of this paper that is developed in chapter 6 is that the social psychological benefits of social movement participation are primarily helpful for ex-offenders that lack cultural and/or social capital or have failed to fully internalize mainstream redemption scripts and justification ideologies. The three individuals that I highlight in this section serve as exceptions that prove the overall assumption of this work: that movement participation is more about what is attained for identity from membership.

High Social Bonds: Donnell

Not long after I made initial contact with Betsy, she set up a meeting so that I could meet with some members of CPA. Only five people were present for my first encounter with CPA and one of these was Donnell. Donnell is a Black male in his mid 30’s who spent nearly five years in prison for drug and gang related issues (This is secondhand information from another group member; Donnell preferred not to discuss his crimes during the interview). Donnell is very well-spoken and wears suits to every meeting that he attends. He is among the most successful members of CPA I encounter in
that he is married with two children, has a prestigious job working on the staff of a city congressperson, and has a college degree that he obtained before his last period of imprisonment.

Figure 4: Representations of CPA members as classified by Organizational Affiliation and Stigma management (Low/Successful Highlighted)
I saw Donnell on and off at meetings for about another year before he left CPA after a meeting that he found to be especially disappointing. He consistently clashed with many members of the group, especially those highlighted in the later section on high affiliation and low stigma management. Donnell’s experience in policy making, connections to criminal justice leaders and state of Ohio politicians, and his education are all resources that could help CPA, yet many members of the group seem indifferent to or annoyed by Donnell. At one meeting, we were discussing changing an Ohio law that allowed for a loophole to be exploited and gave towns an extensive amount of power over the freedom of movement of sex offenders. Donnell said that he thought the politician that he worked for might be interested in promoting the legislation in the state House of Representatives because his boss is especially safe for reelection and has discussed how the law is unjust. This is the sort of political opportunity and resource that many social movements would jump at; however, the consensus among the group is that they want to think about it and see what they can do on their own first. Donnell is clearly annoyed, and with a reasonable argument. The interviews with other members seem to indicate that many of them do not like Donnell because they think that he is conceited and that he thinks that everything is easy to do.

In my interview with Donnell, it becomes clear that he has become used to a standard of achievement that CPA was not giving him. “I work where this stuff happens, for a person that can make this stuff happen, I have seen it work and what they do doesn’t work” Donnell tells me while discussing his reasons for leaving CPA. He adds “They are just a bunch of kooks..haha..you know? I mean I was telling my wife about this stuff and 

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she was cracking up, my kids were asking me about my visit with the crazy people...it’s just that NOTHING ever gets done. And I am part of two other groups that do some stuff, that organize people, but what they do is nothing. So I got this call from Trishelle asking me if I was coming to the next meeting and I was just like ‘um...no, I think I will just hang with my family today’ and that was it.” For Donnell, there is no need to be part of a group like CPA because his family and job already give him components necessary to form successful stigma management scripts, so CPA does not give him what what it gives to other members. Consistent with recidivism literature, Donnell has powerful social bonds with family and friends. I ran into Donnell two more times during my data collection at conferences and both times he came up to me, laughed a bit and asked if I was still with “all those crazy people at CPA?”

**Dripping with Cultural Capital: Becky**

Becky attended meetings for about 4-5 months, depending on how you define first contact, in the latter half of the second year I worked with CPA. She is in her early 20’s and spent 18 months in prison for her part in an armed robbery. She has two years of parole remaining on her sentence when we first meet. Becky is half Italian and half Irish and it makes for a very interesting combination in her looks. At each of the 11 meetings that she attended, Becky was dressed very well, typically wearing fashionable and age-appropriate clothing. She comes from a fairly well off family and did well in high school; at the time of our encounter she was enrolled in a major university in central Ohio with the intention to go into nursing. She is one of the most attractive persons that I have seen in person during my life, which is a relevant part of her stigma management trajectory.
During the first break on Becky’s first meeting she is talking with me a bit and then takes a call on her cell phone. While she is on her cell phone, Deuce, Dizzee, and Darrell are walking past and stop for a second. Dizzee asks “so you going to hit that or what?” meaning he wants to know if I am going to have sex with Becky, a question to which I emphatically reply no. Deuce says “I don’t know man, you saw how she went right for the seat by you, I think that she might be one of them girls that likes thin guys with brains.” I later find out that she sat by me because I “was the only guy that didn’t seem to care whether I sat by you. So I guess I just thought that you seemed the most serious.”

She introduces herself in the first meeting that she attends and discusses her interest in working on issues related to parole and parole officers. Becky tells me that she thinks that her parole officer has hinted at wanting sexual favors for special treatment. He has mentioned to her that she is beautiful and has mentioned multiple times that although he might be hard on her he is not hard on everyone that he supervises. She also feels that the rules governing ex-offenders are quite unfair because they bar her from doing things that she might normally do. During our interview she tells me that she is probably not going to the meetings any more. When I ask her why she says, “I just don’t really feel like we do anything in the meetings, it just feels like a bunch of people talking to hear their own voices…and...haha..um, I don’t really have that hard of a time getting people to pay attention to me, in fact I might have too easy of a time getting attention...haha.” As previously stated, Becky is attractive, well spoken, and bright. She simply does not look like the stereotypes people associate with criminality. When I ask how people respond to her when they find out what she had done she says “Well, I mean, when I tell people most of them think it is funny or interesting. Like this girl I met at a bar, like I told her because
I was at this table and we were telling stories....and when I told her she actually starts talking about what a valuable experience it was and wonders how exciting it was to rob a bank.” She goes on to say that she does not feel like anyone has ever feared her or treated her differently because of her stigma. Becky possesses such a great deal of cultural capital that persons she encounters are able to find her criminal past charming. When she determined that CPA did not do much in terms of actual reform, she left because contestation scripts had little appeal to her. About a year after our interview I contacted Becky, as I attempted to do with all members that left the group I had interviewed, and she told me that she met a surgery resident at a major hospital. After dating for eight months he asked her to marry him; she has decided to be a stay-at-home wife.

Broken Ritualist: Suzanna

For persons like Donnell and Becky, various forms of capital prevent the necessity of something like CPA membership. Other persons might not need CPA membership because they have internalized their stigma to the point that it breaks them. Suzanna is an African American woman in her early thirties. She has been in prison three times, the first for drug possession with intent to distribute and the second and third time were both for violations of her parole. Her first parole violation occurred when she failed to attend her drug counseling sessions twice, while her second parole violation was letting a man with a felony warrant stay in her apartment for a week. She is very bitter about the parole process, to the point that her scripts sound far more like condemnation than redemption of any kind. Suzanna attended meetings for a period of six weeks during
the third year of my data collection and did not participate in any of the meetings. She said she was fearful that she could not be part of the group while on probation because she had been out of prison for a period of 18 months before joining CPA.

Suzanna attended a very contentious meeting where Trishelle, Deuce, Trotter, Dizzee, and Dahlia get into a heated debate about whether or not CPA should allow members to speak for the group at a rally called “No More Prisons” geared toward the elimination of the criminal justice system. During lunch break, I ask her what she thinks of the meetings and she says, “what’s the point of all that arguing, prisons aren’t going anywhere.” Two meetings later was the last time I saw Suzanna at an actual meeting. I called her for an interview and she said that she would only be willing to do one if I could come and do it while she was working. Suzanna is a convenience store clerk and I go to her place of work for a morning shift. In her store, she works behind bullet proof glass in a low income neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio. Over the 45 minutes that I spoke with her she sold around 10 cartons of cigarettes and a number of single cans of beer. I ask her why she stopped coming to meetings and she says “I just don’t need any of that, all that arguing...its like those people live in a fantasy world.” She says that she joined the group “to I don’t know, maybe to like help, or give my thoughts, or I don’t know, maybe even to like meet people but those people I didn’t like.” Suzanna clearly rejects the more abstract parts of discussion at CPA, she was drawn in by frames of reform and redemption but contestation frames do not appeal to her at all. When I asked her why she seems be doing better now than her previous two attempts at reentry she says, “cuz I don’t want to go back, I’m scared, they scared me now, I’m scared to do anything wrong.” She tells me that she just keeps to herself now, living only with her mom. She also attends church
regularly even though “I’m not really a religious person, but it’s like a good thing to do.” Later in the interview Suzanna says, “I’m just going to stay in this job until this place shuts down and mind my own business.” What comes out of Suzanna’s interview is a clear message, she has trained herself to avoid the idea of mainstream success and the idea that she can somehow beat the system. Suzanna has given up, so for her a place like CPA is more dangerous than helpful.

WHERE DO YOU TURN NOW: LOW AFFILIATION AND POOR STIGMA MANAGEMENT

Logically, the counter to the successful cases highlighted in Chapter 6 are those individuals who maintain very low levels of affiliation and fail to properly manage stigma and/or return to prison. In this section, I provide profiles of the seven individuals in my dataset that fail to maintain any real level of CPA membership, fail to properly manage stigma during the reentry process, and fail to avoid recidivism. This group is highlighted in Figure 5. First, I highlight individuals that use highly traditional condemnation scripts. Maruna (2002) discusses condemnation scripts as personal scripts that either (a) frame redemption as an impossible task (b) frame the framer as a person that is incapable of changing or (c) frame the framer as desiring criminal activity and being comfortable with the commission of criminal activity. Second, I profile four individuals that use a style of script I term “Loving the Life.” In these scripts, the targets embrace criminal activity and lifestyle, rejecting redemption.
Traditional Condemnation Scripts

What’s the Fucking Point: Michael

I only see Michael at one meeting and it is at the very beginning of my time with CPA. At the first official meeting I attend he comes up and talks to me in a very tense
way about how hard it is to be out of prison. He tells me, “I don’t get to come to many meetings because I’ve got to work all the time or my P.O. will just kill me, he would love to get me I know it. They love getting sex offenders.” Michael is a heavy-set white male in his late 20’s or early 30’s. He works the night shift at a factory putting together boxes and picks up day shifts whenever he can. At the meeting he attends he consistently brings any discussion back to the issue of sex offenders to discuss the problems that he is currently having because of all of the restrictions on his work.

In our interview, Michael spends most of the time further identifying issues that exist for him. He is friends with Trishelle, who told him that Donnell might be able to get him a better job. Michael tells me “You know there isn’t anybody that gives a shit about me, people hate me, Donnell can’t even spend energy to make one damn phone call to get me a job.” Toward the end of the interview he asks me how much money I make a year, a question I refuse to answer for fear that he might attempt to ask me for help. Michael represents a classic condemnation script in that he believes that there is no way out of his circumstances and that the world is completely against him. About three weeks after our interview, Trishelle announces to the group that Michael got “busted by his P.O. for dropping dirty,” which means that he tested positive for drugs. Michael attempted to use the group for assistance but seemed too far entrenched in his stigma to overcome it.

_Hurts So Good...C’mon Prison Make it Hurt So Good: D-Wayne_

D-Wayne’s story is similar to that of Michael’s. D-Wayne is a convicted sex-offender who is out of prison and having problems with his parole officer. He only came to three meetings primarily because he is so caught up in trying to get to work. He says
that he has been harassed a few times in his neighborhood for being a registered sex-offender; at the meetings that he attended he asked a few questions about how to cope with the stigma of being an ex-offender that has committed sex crimes. He works at a grocery store and clearly has issues believing in himself.

When I ask him how he is doing he always gives the same answer, that he is “not dead yet, so that’s pretty good.” He says this phrase at both meetings and at the start of the interview that I have with him over the phone. I ask him why he always says that and what it means, he replies “it means I’m not dead yet, and that for someone like me that is pretty good.” Upon prompting he follows up:

Well, I guess it’s that being a sex offender, I feel like people are just terrified to be around me, like people that know will almost tense up when they shake your hand like I’ve got something they can catch. Like the place I work [a community owned grocery store bagging and rounding up carts], I can just ask a basic question like how was your weekend and you can tell that they actually feel like they have to think about how they answer your question because they are scared that you are going to like track them or something, especially the ones with children seem scared; there’s nothing I can do to have a good life.

This statement, absent verification, can still be understood as how D-Wayne understands himself, which is highly significant. He says he did not go to meetings anymore because “they just made me angry, its like all this stuff that is never going to get better, so I don’t understand the point about complaining.” At one point during the interview D-Wayne compares his life to that of Morgan Freeman’s character in the film Shawshank Redemption: “okay so you have seen it, so you know how he finally gets released from prison after decades and he is bagging groceries and asks his boss for a bathroom break and the boss makes fun of him asking. That’s how I feel, its like he was permanently changed, and wasn’t used to making decisions for himself and was just broken, it was like
he missed prison.” While prison was not a good experience for D-Wayne, at least he was aware that it was supposed to be a bad experience, reentry serves as a constant reminder of what he cannot achieve: a normal life. A few months later D-Wayne went back to prison for stealing from his grocery store.

**Loving the Life**

*I want it all, and I want it Now: Janet*

Within a very short period of time I realized that Janet is unlike Michael and D-Wayne; she realizes that she could work hard and could take steps to make her life longer and more sustainable. However, she rejects the desire or legitimacy of long-term satisfaction for short-term success and money. Janet is an attractive black woman in her mid 20’s. She has spent around two years in prison for child abuse and endangerment. She currently works as an exotic dancer and occasionally does shifts at a laundromat downtown. Janet only attended two meetings, at the first meeting she asked whether or not people in the group could help her to get her kid back; she complained a great deal about all the steps that are necessary to get back her child. Betsy quickly explained that CPA does not help individuals with specific procedural problems with the state and that there was nothing the group could do to help her. She said that she would stick around and see what she thinks. I expected her to leave at the lunchtime break, but when I went outside to assimilate with the smokers for lunchtime discussion, I noticed that she was talking quite a bit with Jimmy, an ex-offender discussed later in this chapter. The interaction seemed very flirtatious and then she sat with Jimmy for the second half of the meeting.
I have a feeling that she will not return for a second meeting so I asked Janet to schedule an interview with me. She agreed and asked for us to meet at a restaurant in downtown Columbus. When I ask how she likes CPA she says, “I just don’t know if I’m feeling it, they’re talking all about politics and that’s just not my thing.” I ask whether rights issues are important to her and she flippantly says, “naw..(laughs)...that just ain’t my thing (said in deep voice)...I’ll let someone else take care of that stuff, I’ve got enough going on for me.” When I ask her about getting back her daughter she says, “yeah, that’s something I’m trying to do, it’s horrible.” Janet continues, “they want to watch me interact with her and I have to go to all of these classes but I just don’t know.” Janet’s daughter currently lives with Janet’s grandmother and she tells me “If I really want to see my daughter my grandmother isn’t going to stop me so I just have a really hard time getting motivated.” It is clear that Janet has no real appreciation for the long-term effects of her current actions. In a conversation about her job status, she says that being an exotic dancer “pays a lot more money than some of these jobs I know that people have.” Over the period of the interview I find out that she has no health insurance or retirement plan and she has made no attempt to save money while she has been working. She tells me that when money is tight she has “some friends that I can talk with to get some things as I need them.” Upon follow-up there is no real explanation of what this means, implying that she might be referring to persons that engage in some form of criminal activity. At our interview, I notice that Janet is wearing a name brand pair of winter boots that I know to cost somewhere between $180 and $230. She seems to want everything to come to her very quickly; valuing immediate gratification.
She spent the last half hour of our time at the restaurant drinking two cocktails and probing me for information on the criminal justice system. When she realized that she had obtained all of the information that she wanted, she told me that she was ready to go and I asked for our checks. When the waitress asked if we would like one check or two I said two and Janet gets very angry. She says “no you have to pay for me, I can’t pay for this.” She follows up by telling me that she would not have agreed to an interview if she did not get something out of it, specifically the meal and drinks. I reminded her that I had explicitly told her that I would not be able to pay for her because it was a bad precedent to set for future interviews. She tells me that I never told her that and begins to raise her voice. Reluctantly, I paid her part of the check which came to around $28 with tip. I was disappointed with myself because I realized that I have just indulged her desire for immediate gratification in such circumstances. Janet arrived at her second meeting about a week and a half later with Jimmy; they have driven to the meeting together. She sat with him and seemed very close to him, touching his knee a few times and whispering to him and laughing during the opening half of the meeting. Janet seemed bored with the meeting and at the lunch break she and Jimmy leave, something that I did not see Jimmy do for the rest of the time I worked with CPA. Jimmy came to the next meeting two weeks later alone and when I asked him if Janet was coming that week he says, “I don’t know, me and her don’t talk anymore.” Dizzee later told me that Janet stayed at Jimmy’s house one night and left the next morning before Jimmy had woken up; his cell phone, a small portable television, and an envelope with cash from two prior paychecks were gone.
While Janet seems to desire immediate gratification in terms of economic and social satisfaction, some members of CPA seem to desire violence and intimidation. What?!What?! gets his name because it is a phrase I hear him say over a dozen times during the five meetings that he attends with CPA. What?!What?! is a 27 year old, very thin African American male that stands about 6 foot 4 inches tall. What?!What?! came to the group because Dizzee, who I discuss in the previous chapter, asked him to come to meetings. Dizzee tells me that What?!What?! is “kind of a cousin of mine,” he goes on to say “Yeah, he was a project of mine, believe it or not he can be normal, he loves his mom, he’s kind of smart too (laughs)...but yeah, that was fucked up, it was time to go.” What?!What?! spent time in prison for beating up a store clerk while robbing a store. He also implies that he was arrested as a juvenile more than once.

What?!What?! drives down from Cleveland with his cousin for meetings. His social bond with Dizzee illustrates some sense of hope for Dizzee’s future, but it is also telling that the primary role model in What?!What?!’s life is a convicted felon who prides himself on scaring people, albeit a success story. What?!What?! speaks very rarely in meetings and most of his contributions are to laugh at something that someone says or add emphasis by saying “woh” or “yeah” when someone says something fairly damaging to someone else. In the second meeting during lunch, What?!What?! is having a conversation with free worlder Bobby and I am told two different versions of what happened. Bobby tells me “He said something about how he was playing a dice game with some people he hung out with when he was younger, and he almost seemed like he regretted it or something but maybe I just read it wrong. But so I say ‘yeah, probably not
the best move’ but almost like I was agreeing with him, I wasn’t trying to make fun of him and he starts to call me a bitch and acting like he is going to hit me and saying ‘what...what’ and then Dizzee and Darrell come over and calm him down. I have no idea what happened.” I managed to get an interview with What?!What?! almost exclusively because Dizzee told him to do it. His interpretation of the encounter is that “I was just talking about my weekend and that bitch starts acting like he’s my fucking dad or something....I wasn’t going to do anything, Dizzee’d kick my ass if I did that, but I just wanted to see that bitch scared to death, and he was.” I learn quickly that What?!What?! seems to value power through fear and has no real plans to stay away from situations that led him to his previous situation. When I ask him if he feels like he is different now than before he went into prison he answers “I mean, I’m older now, so there’s a lot of like younger guys in my neighborhood.” When I follow up it is clear that he has not really considered understanding himself in a different way because he does not understand the question in terms of himself.

In his fifth meeting with CPA, What?!What?! became the only member of CPA that I saw kicked out of the group in the three years that I worked with the group. During a lunch break, I was walking back from my car toward the building and What?!What?! made a comment about the clothing that I was wearing. I was wearing a pink and white striped shirt under a dark blue sweater, and as I walked up What?!What?! was laughing and said “What’s up man...with your gayass shirt?” Trotter, a member of CPA mentioned in the last chapter, said “At least he’s not wearing a raggedy old Starter hat from three years ago.” What?!What?! immediately launched himself toward Trotter and punched him and then tackled him to the ground and started hitting him. Deuce
singlehandedly pulls What?!What?! off of Trotter and he is immediately pushed into Dizzee’s car by Dizzee, Darrell and Deuce. In the second half of the meeting a motion was brought before the group for him to be permanently barred from CPA meetings, which is affirmed unanimously. A couple of months later Dizzee started a meeting by saying “I have an announcement to make, I know this is going to surprise you all, but my cousin What?!What?! was arrested for beating the shit out of some poor girl in Cleveland last week.” In this case, What?!What?! lacked capital to make redemption approachable, and he failed to find value in the CPA’s organizational frames, which he described in his interview as “not my style.”

What?!What?!’s condemnation script is similar to a subcultural script where violence and intimidation are valued above redemption and more critical forms of contestation. Another member, Ezra, has similar problems abandoning violence and aggressively pushes a subcultural script. Ezra is a short, stocky 29-year-old Black male who wears a t-shirt with an Ezra Pound quote on it yet lacks knowledge on who Ezra Pound is. He explains “oh, I got this from the church.” Ezra’s participation in CPA lasts for roughly three meetings toward the end of my second year of observation. Trishelle and Dawn brought Ezra to CPA after meeting him at a church soup that they attend. Ezra has spent “around 5 years” in prison for battering his live-in girlfriend and stealing her mother’s car, although he describes that as, “this bullshit they added on so they could put me in longer, see we both used to drive that car all the time, but when the cops came I was away in the car and so all of a sudden I stole it.”

In meetings, Ezra is never violent and never makes attempts to physically intimidate people, he is quite small in stature and would likely never attempt to initiate a
conflict with most male members of CPA. He often gets frustrated about our topics and seems especially irate when the group focuses too heavily on women’s prisons. In his second meeting he actually expressed interest at the start of the meeting in talking about laws regarding violent offenders and job exclusions in Ohio. He expressed interest in it out of turn when the group moved to new business. With only a half hour left before the meeting adjourned for the day, we moved to the issue of feminine hygiene products in women’s prisons. Dahlia is discussing how tampons are regularly unavailable for women on their periods, a problem that some members seemed uncomfortable discussing but seemed to acknowledge as an important issue. When there is a lull in the discussion Ezra says “Can I make a comment?” When Betsy gives him the floor he says “Who cares what these Bull-Dykes do when they aren’t eating each other out?” Trishelle yells out of turn, however the group is used to Trishelle yelling out of turn, and Ezra laughs at how upset Trishelle is and then does not offer an apology. At this moment I am sitting next to Dizzee and Darrell and I see Darrell look at Dizzee and mouth the words “crazy ass niggers.” Most members of the group just seem slightly uncomfortable at his contribution but no one really seems surprised. Deuce will tell me months later in his interview “yeah, I just think most of the people in the group have met millions of guys like that, he’s the type of guy I was trying to get away from.” Ezra is probably the most sexist and among the most homophobic people I encounter in my three years with the group. He regularly uses slurs for women and homosexuals and when I approach him for an interview he says “okay, it’s not going to be in your bedroom or something is it...I’m just playin’, I know you’re married.”
In our interview, Ezra is actually quite pleasant and among the most open with regards to his past. Ezra never graduated from high school and has no plans to get his G.E.D., he has never held a job for a period of time longer than two months, he has never had health insurance and does not even have a bank account. When I ask him if his time in prison changed how he thought about himself and what goals he had in getting out he said “I guess I just wanted to not be an inmate again. I don’t think I changed at all.” When I asked what made him different from other people that entered prison and came out feeling differently, he says “some weak ass faggots become favorites in prison and they kind of get broken and start feeling all bad about what they had done. I just feel confident about who I am and I don’t need to change.” I decide to directly ask him whether he thinks he will end up back in prison and his answer says a lot about who he is and how he understands society: “I can’t say because I don’t know, I mean that’s out of my hands. I guess it just seems like good or bad, it doesn’t really matter, prison just kind of finds you and there is nothing I can really do about that.” Ezra’s view on recidivism is fatalistic; he makes no connection between his own thoughts, actions, and outcomes.

Ezra’s fatalistic attitude is complemented by his violent and aggressive nature toward women. While I am not a psychiatrist, it seems clear that his relationship with his mother is part of what dictates his approach to women today. Ezra does not know his father and he was raised by his mother who used to “beat the shit out of me when I was younger, I think just for fun sometimes.” He describes his mother as a very large woman who is incredibly aggressive, with a dominant personality. Ezra relays an interaction he witnessed between his mom and one of her boyfriends when he was under the age of ten:
I don’t know what happened ahead of time but my momma wanted Johnny to turn off the TV and go to the store for something. And he was watching a football game on TV and said ‘yeah I will, I will.’ So she asks him again and he says the same thing, and then again and the same thing and finally momma just comes in, I’m sitting right next to him, comes in behind him and pounds the side of her fist right into his ear and he screams, and then she just starts pounding on him screaming ‘get up off of your ass and go to the store.’ and this guy is fighting back and momma is kicking his ass still and he starts crying and says ‘okay stop stop, okay, please stop’ acting like a faggot pussy, I don’t remember how old I am but you know I mean I’m young and I never used to cry like that….hm….I actually kind of pitied that guy.

When this story is paralleled with his story about his abuse of his girlfriend Maria, a clear picture of how Ezra understands his violence comes out:

Yeah, I mean I can talk about it, I’m not ashamed of what happened, I was with my lady at my apartment and she started texting this guy that I had told her not to text, because they used to be together and so I told her that he was off limits…and this has been going on for like a year now…and she would tell me no, and I would say if you want to stay in this apartment then that’s the rules. And so I took her phone out of her hand and threw it on the ground trying to break it. And she goes crazy and punches me in the face, and I never hit her unless she hit me first, but I just felt like this time I needed to show her that I’m not her bitch you know, so I just started wailing on her. When I was done I put her in the bedroom and drove to go see some friends.

In these descriptions, we see the value that Ezra puts on dominating women. When I ask him about CPA and what he thinks of it he tells me that “I don’t know about that group, I don’t think I am getting anything out of it.” He only attended one more meeting and then I never was able to get in touch with him again.

Condemnation in Redemption’s Clothing: Fiona and Jules

While persons like Janet, What?!What?! and Ezra do not make an effort to form a public redemption script, some members of CPA present a faux redemption that is used to serve a condemnation script. Fiona is a black woman in her late 20’s who is friends
with Janet. She went to prison for “a couple of years” for drug possession and solicitation. In her first meeting she says that she is having a hard time making it but knows that she will succeed because she is special. She also discusses her excitement about the group and how happy she is to help people less fortunate than herself. At her first lunch break, she asked me to lend her five dollars, promising to pay it back; each of the four meetings after that she tells me that she forgot to bring the money and is really sorry. She seems well liked by the free worlders and for the most part by the ex-offenders as well, in part it would seem because she is very believable. In our interview, she states, “I am different now, because I know what I did wrong and I want to change and you know, be a better person, and do a better job with my life.” In this same interview she tells me that she has used drugs “a couple of times” and sold her body for sex “only when necessary to get by that month.” She also admits to not having much of a plan even though she has been out of prison for well over a year. After her fifth meeting, she does not return to any more CPA events. At a planning meeting roughly a month later, I was told by Vitamin C that Fiona had borrowed money from nearly everyone in the group and asked Deuce if she could move in with him. In discussing the difficulties that she is having with the reentry process, Fiona says “you know, I just miss that easy money.” Fiona had a public redemption script but failed to put it into effect in her private efforts.

Jules is a skinny white male in his late twenties who nearly took over CPA during the first year that I was there. When Jules came to his first meeting he discussed how much interest he had in working with the group. In his interview, he says “I know the good things and the bad things about the CJS, I definitely have experience to contribute to the group.” He was in prison for armed robbery and once before that for assault. Jules
is very charming and does a very good job of presenting himself and seeming sincere about wanting to change his life but also wanting to hold the justice system accountable for its actions. When I ask him how he is different now than before prison he says, “I’m just smarter now, I made some poor decisions before that got me caught, and I let my temper go too much, but now I think I am just more aware of how to seize opportunities when they come to me.” When I ask if he feels pressures as an ex-offender he says “not really, that’s just kind of the game, everyone is trying to get ahead of everyone else, so people just try to keep me out of certain areas because they can, I don’t blame them, I would do the same thing.” While Jules discusses a desire consistent with redemptive contestation, he does not maintain a consistent script in any other part of what he discusses. Basically, his aptitude for aggression and power still exists but he is attempting to apply them to a different area. In his fourth meeting with CPA, Betsy made the announcement that at the next meeting we would need to elect a new executive board. Jules said he would like to run for president of the group, against Betsy. This came as a surprise to me and many others. At the next meeting, he brought six female friends who all paid their dues that day and then participated in the election process. Betsy won by a vote of 16 to 14. Jules seems very frustrated and at the lunch break he and all of his female friends leave the group, I never saw Jules again. When I attempted to follow up with Jules a year later his mother told me that he violated his parole and is back in prison. For Jules, the organizational and individual level frames of CPA did not provide meaning, CPA itself served as a test ground for him to gain power.
WHAT’S WRONG? HIGH AFFILIATION AND POOR STIGMA MANAGEMENT

In Chapter six I highlighted the majority of ex-offender CPA members who I categorize as having high levels of affiliation and successful stigma management scripts. Those individuals used CPA membership in various ways to aid in some form of redemption script and a move toward desistance. Up to this point in Chapter 7, I have discussed why some individuals who did not care for CPA succeeded and why some individuals who did not care for CPA failed. In this section, I examine the five members of CPA that I identify as having high levels of affiliation with CPA who fail to manage stigma, desist, and form pathways to redemption. The group these five members fall into is highlighted in Figure 6.

Understanding individuals with high affiliation and unsuccessful outcomes completes the discussion of ways in which social movement participation can be used. The five CPA members that I follow fall into two groups. First, opportunistic contestation, where members use CPA as a platform for their own contestation scripts, but do not embrace CPA with a redemptive perspective. Second, condemnation contestation, where the individual uses CPA’s frames to validate his or her own contestation scripts and move toward a more positive view of recidivism.
Figure 6: Representations of CPA members as classified by Organizational Affiliation and Stigma management (High/Unsuccessful Highlighted)
Opportunistic Contestation

Contesting Monsters: Dahlia and Mitchell

Dahlia and Mitchell came to every meeting together, sat together, and discussed most issues as a team. Dahlia is a white woman in her late 40’s or early 50’s who has been in prison on 3 separate occasions, twice for drug possession and once for felonious assault. She looks somewhat maternal which probably contributes to her ability to get a job as a mail clerk at a law office, a job she implies she got by lying about her criminal record. She contributes to the newsletter of her partner Mitchell, a white man in his late 50’s with a bushy grey beard. He takes a fairly militant stance on many criminal justice issues. He refuses to tell me what he spent time in prison for arguing that it is “unimportant, move on.” He also tells me that he does not like me using the word inmate, because that is too pleasant a word. Instead, he prefers that I “call us prisoners, that’s we are/were, prisoners of the state in an unjust war.” Mitchell’s newsletter is filled primarily with frames that contest the state in a way that is consistent with revolution and anarchy. Dahlia and Mitchell both identify religiously as Pagan and a number of their suggestions for reform deal with issues of religious freedom. In addition, Mitchell is very angry about what he calls “the animalizing of white males” in prison. He is very upset about what he considers preferential treatment being given in prisons to African Americans and Latinos. The two of them are members the entirety of the time that I am at CPA and never missed a meeting that I attended.

In meetings, Dahlia and Mitchell almost exclusively engage in behavior that could be described as preaching. Dahlia regularly stands up when she says something in a meeting and Mitchell occasionally seems to have notes written out when he makes a
comment. Often times their comments are tangential or completely off topic. In one meeting, CPA was discussing the exclusive contract that one phone company has with Ohio prisons, a problem which is costing families of prisoners a great deal of money. Mitchell interjected with a speech of about 4-5 minutes about how the criminal justice system is a corporate front for the unjust state, adding that if there were no prisons this would not be an issue. In a separate meeting, Dahlia used a discussion of prisoner mail to discuss the lack of pagan books in prison libraries. They also alluded to a great deal of crime that the two of them are still committing. On more than one occasion there was a clear smell of marijuana coming from the two of them when they arrived at a meeting. In addition, they consistently openly admit minor crimes such as tax fraud, pirating copyrighted materials, and even petty theft. When a new informational pamphlet was created for CPA, Dahlia made 5,000 copies for CPA. When asked how much she paid for the 10 reams of multi-colored paper and copies, she says “I got them from some people that didn’t deserve them.” On a couple of occasions they allude to the desire to commit violence. Dahlia and Mitchell had to leave one meeting early because they were attending a prison protest in southern Ohio. Before they leave Mitchell tells us that the two of them hang out with an uncivilized group and then sincerely says “if you see us in the paper tomorrow know that we are good people and that we are only doing what we have to do.”

Dahlia and Mitchell avoid any concept of redemption and embrace crime as a protest of what they see as an unjust system. When I ask Mitchell if he changed as a result of being in prison he says “yes...I feel more certain than ever that our government is unjust. They had no right to take me prisoner, or dictate my actions. I never agreed to be part of America, they decided that for me.” He later adds “I have no remorse for the
'crimes’ that I committed, what right do they have to tell me what to do.’” Strangely, Mitchell and Dahlia both give the exact same response when I ask them why they remain members of CPA. They each say “They're a good group of people that appreciate the truth.” On a Saturday afternoon during my data collection, I attended a farmer’s market in a suburb of Columbus with my wife at the time. On this particular day there is an especially large flea market next to the farmer’s market and we began to walk through and look at items. I saw Dahlia and Mitchell at the flea market looking at a table with a bunch of clothes. I told my wife that those are people from my sample and that I did not want to run into them. She and I watched them for a bit and she comments “They look so normal, like grandparents, hm...I would have never guessed.” Mitchell and Dahlia do look normal and they are likely treated normally in their day-to-day lives. Frames of redemption and reform do not resonate with the two of them, but CPA allows them a platform that they do not always have to put forth their strong militant stance.

**Condemnation Contestation Scripts**

*Unstoppable Condemnation: Jimmy*

Jimmy is the only person in my sample who was a member of CPA, then went to prison, then came back to CPA. I had heard about him the first few months of my membership because Trishelle would regularly comment on how Jimmy was going to be coming back soon, a fact that regularly garners mixed reactions from the crowd. Jimmy is a pudgy white man in his early 30’s who constantly seems nervous. He went to prison for robbery for “a while” and then was sent back to prison 18 months later for a parole violation. When he returned to the group he was ready to vent and complain about his
treatment in prison and by his parole officer. While a consistent member of the group, his only contribution to any meeting is to tell a story about how he was mistreated or how difficult it has been to follow all of the rules of parole. He hangs out primarily with Dahlia, Mitchell, Trishelle, and Dawn, the four consistent members of the group most likely to affirm his opinion. He is typically the first to nod his head vigorously when one of those four talk and he is also quick to say “you don’t know man” when a free worlder says something that differs from that of an ex-offender.

When we have a chance to talk I am surprised by the opportunities that Jimmy has had in his life. He comes from an upper middle-class family and has parents that are willing to help him out, graduated high school and attended college for a short period of time, has a car, his own apartment and a regular job at an independently owned hardware store that is run by his father’s friend. When I ask him how he has changed after this second stint in prison he says, “I’m even worse off than before, seriously I don’t know how people do it.” He continues for nearly 10 minutes with stories about how his parole officer has “screwed him over” multiple times and how there are all of these restrictions on him. In our conversation he admits that he has stolen a couple of times now from a liquor store next to the hardware store at which he works, and also admits to regularly using marijuana. I ask why he likes being part of CPA and he says “I guess it just makes me feel better, like its not my fault, those people speak the truth.” Many people outlined in Chapter 6 take a completely opposite perspective than Jimmy and use contestation frames to find redemption; the use value of CPA for Jimmy is instead to construct an excuse for his illegal behavior.
Trishelle and Dawn are a lesbian couple that are part of CPA for the entirety of the time that I am a member. The two of them attend everything together except for one meeting that Dawn could not attend for medical reasons. Trishelle is a very tall, very stocky Native American woman who is likely in her late 30’s. Her appearance would be very intimidating to many because she has one eye that has a slight deformation which makes her face have a look that is both stern and intense. She talks very loudly, to the point that I can hear her talking outside of the building during lunch breaks at meetings. Betsy tells me that “she went to prison for pulling a gun out on a cop, she probably did a lot of other stuff too.” Trishelle is dramatic and overbearing at meetings. Often times she will shout down people to get them to stop talking. At other times when people attempt to shout down someone else she will get angry that they did not use Robert’s Rules of Order. In any given meeting she will present 10-15 motions for an action to be taken, typically these motions are rejected without vote. She consistently sends emails to the group and freely gives out members phone numbers to ex-offenders. Her main contribution to the group is to consistently bring in a story about past CPA action, her own troubles in prison, or her own philanthropy toward ex-offenders. She also cites how her suggestions have worked in other groups that she is a part of and provides such examples as evidence for why they should work in CPA.

In our interview, Trishelle identifies the importance of having her voice heard in a meeting. She explains why she is an important component of CPA:

*You know its like I don’t mean to be rude about this but I’m just fucking smarter than these people, I’m smarter than you Todd, I’m smarter than Betsy, I’m smarter than Deuce….when it comes to this stuff. I’m the one who has been in this*
group for 6 years, I’m the one who gets up at 2 in the morning to bring a pair of pants to an inmate that was released from prison with no clothing, I’m the one that calls P.O.’s and attorneys and tells them to back the fuck off...you know...I mean I’m the one that promotes this group more than anyone else and brings in new people every meeting. I’m sorry...but that’s the truth, I’m the best and so I should fucking talk a lot during the meeting. A lot of these people don’t know how fucked up the system is, they don’t realize that these people would rather just kill you than help you.

It is very important to Trishelle that she be respected and that people realize that she is a more valuable resource than the state. She is very quick to suggest ways that citizens can do things instead of the government. It does not seem that she dislikes reform; it is just that she has given up on it. In the third year that I was observing CPA they got a 30 minute meeting with a high ranking official in the Ohio Department of Corrections and we were allowed to bring 5 people. Betsy, Trishelle, Dahlia, Deuce and Lena ended up going. I received a phone call a couple of hours after the meeting from Betsy. Betsy informed me that Trishelle started yelling at the man half way through the meeting and told him that he “doesn’t know shit about corrections.”

One of my first tasks in CPA was to help them update the pamphlet that CPA gives out at events. I consulted with each member of the executive board and asked what changes and updates need to be made. When I finished the draft I sent it out to everyone including Trishelle. Trishelle managed the website for CPA and therefore is part of the executive council. At about midnight, the night that my draft was sent by Betsy to Dahlia to be printed I received a phone call from Trishelle on my unlisted home phone number, to which I had not given anyone at CPA access. She asks me, “where did you get the nerve to demote me to web designer? You need to watch yourself, don’t do that Todd, don’t be stupid!” Trishelle was upset that I did not list her title as webmaster or
webmistress. When I attempted to explain to her that she did not tell me to change that even though she was given the opportunity she proceeded to yell at me and talk, almost without pause, for a half hour straight. In the next meeting she scolded me in front of everyone. Inadvertently, I had threatened Trishelle’s feelings of superiority and dominance in the group.

Dawn is a white woman in her late 30’s who talks very little and seems to abide by what Trishelle asks her to do. She admits to being a frequent drug user but says that she has not been in an adult prison ever, just juvenile facilities for violence. This lack of an adult record is why Dawn is actually an attorney, what kind of attorney is not clear but her resources as an attorney are the way that Trishelle gained access to my home phone number. When I ask Dawn what keeps her going to CPA meetings she says, “well Trishelle really likes going, I think she feels good about going, and feels respected.” Dawn does not identify her own reasons for being part of the group and seems to participate in minor criminal behavior with Trishelle in an almost ritualistic way. Her reason for going to CPA is relational. She states, “there is really only so much the law can do, so it is nice to be part of a group that respects that.”

When I ask Trishelle why she keeps going to CPA she gives reasons that indicate that membership almost facilitates her criminal behavior. She states “It makes me feel alive, like I can take over the world. I’m not on parole or on probation. I don’t like the Department of Corrections, I don’t need the Department of Corrections. I answer to a higher power now and it is these non-judgemental people in CPA.” Trishelle admits to frequent drug use, occasional theft to “help with the bills,” and computer fraud. I ask her
if she feels like those actions are consistent with the mission of CPA she says, “absolutely, aren’t you at the meetings, these people know how hard it is, they know I wouldn’t do this stuff unless I needed to.” In my three years with CPA, I find this to be a misperception on Trishelle’s part, but this seems to be the point. Trishelle uses CPA’s acceptance of contestation as a way to rationalize her behavior.

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I discuss ex-offender members of CPA that follow trajectories unlike the success stories of Chapter 6. In exploring these three intersections of organizational affiliation and stigma management outcome I am able to demonstrate how individual membership in CPA is negotiated by various members. In addition, I demonstrate how CPA’s structural organization contributes to outcomes that extend beyond simply using CPA facilitate more effective stigma management trajectories.

I begin by explaining the motivations of CPA members with low organizational affiliation and successful stigma management outcomes. I argue that members succeed while not participating in CPA for a variety of reasons. First, some members possess social bonds such as family and job skills that allow them to cope with the stigma they face as ex-offenders. Second, some members possess cultural capital such as beauty, fashion sense, and education, which allow them, generally speaking, to avoid the stigma associated with criminality. For these first two types of members the familial and individual aspects of CPA are not appealing, therefore failure to uphold governmental and inter-organizational mandates cause the members to leave. Third, some members experiences with prison were so horrible that they become dedicated to redemption due to
fear of the system. For these sorts of members, the individual mandates of CPA present a threat to their redemption as opposed to a benefit.

Members of CPA who maintain low organizational affiliation and unsuccessful stigma management are generally explained in terms of their inability to identity with any mandates of CPA structure. First, some individuals face intense forms of contestation that overwhelm their ability to form redemption scripts. Second, some individuals have a dedication to their formal criminal lifestyle and still embrace immediate gratification, and some forms of violence. For these individuals, CPA’s failure to provide direct and tangible benefits or privileges for ex-offenders creates an unappealing context for them, and they eventually leave the group.

Finally, I explain the group of CPA members who maintain a high level of organizational affiliation yet fail to successfully manage stigma. One explanation for this outcome is that certain members find use in CPA, but not in the formation of redemption scripts. These members, that I term contesting monsters, use the individual and familial mandates of CPA as a way to push their own contestation agendas, even though they do not understand the contestation in redemption terms. A second explanation comes in the form of members who use the contestation scripts in CPA as support for their own personal forms of condemnation. Specifically, there are a series of members who will use the anti-state discourse of CPA meetings as support for their belief that avoiding criminality is impossible.
Chapter 8:
Conclusion and Finishing Thoughts

RESEARCH PURPOSE

My research explores the relationship between Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA), a prisoner’s rights organization, and the ex-offenders who affiliate with the group. My purpose in exploring this relationship is to determine what ex-offenders gain from social movement participation. I address the lack of literature that explores the way that ex-offenders develop positive self-identity and techniques for managing how they will be perceived in daily interactions. I contend that there are numerous undeniable effects of incarceration on ex-offenders, but argue that the most difficult challenge faced during the reentry process involves ex-offenders making their own decisions and reintegrating into civilian communities. I make three assumptions about an ex-offender that joins a prisoner rights group: (a) she has concerns about a lack of prisoner rights and/or need for more prisoner rights; (b) she experiences and/or identifies negative impacts as a result of her perception that the rights of prisoners and ex-offenders are incomplete; and (c) she believes that joining the social movement will yield an advantage from which she will benefit. I argue that membership in a group such as Citizen/Prisoner Alliance (CPA) is practiced and negotiated by members based on needs dictated by stigma management identity work that varies by the individual circumstances of the ex-offender joining the
group. Specifically, attaining structural goals dictated at the organizational level of CPA is far less significant to most CPA members than: (a) positive and/or negative experiences gained from participating in the internal struggles; and (b) viable routes toward the use of positive and/or negative narratives and frames of the group in constructing an individual stigma management identity.

**MAJOR FINDINGS**

My organizational analysis of CPA reveals a prisoner rights group that is plagued by numerous structural problems. CPA is a state chapter of a national organization that fails to place important guidelines on its subsidiaries. My data reveal that other state chapters succeed primarily because of strong leadership and rigid bylaws instituted by the leadership within those state groups. CPA leadership and membership in Ohio consistently struggle with: (a) a lack of accountability; (b) nebulous leadership structure; (c) a lack of budget mandates from the national office; (d) the personal agendas of strong willed members; (e) avoidance of mandates on the order of meetings, and; (f) a lack of specific goals that can serve as measures of success. The Ohio chapter of CPA can be considered fairly unsuccessful if judged by its stated goal to create prison reform and provide structural help to ex-offenders going through the process of criminal reentry. Organizational traits of CPA enable the members that comprise the group to shape CPA into nearly any type of group they desire. My data reveal that the current membership and leadership of CPA have created a dynamic that favors talk over action, focuses on frames of condemnation and contestation, and heavily privileges the voices of ex-offenders while often shaming the voices of free worlders. Additionally, CPA neglects steps that can be
taken to utilize political opportunity and avoids most opportunities to effectively mobilize resources. CPA does participate consistently in attempts to symbolically transform narratives on the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC), the criminal justice system as a whole, the rights of ex-offenders, and the concept of a static criminal trait. However, these symbolic transformations rarely emerge organizationally at the public level. These limitations of CPA membership drive a number of people out of the group.

I argue that CPA is nonetheless a success because it gives members a venue to explore important issues of identity and state action. I conceptualize success in a movement as the satisfaction of group members and consistent maintenance of group affiliation. I conclude that members choose to stay in CPA because of the social psychological benefits of membership. A large component of CPA membership is ex-offenders who lack coping mechanisms that will help them properly deal with the stigma they face as ex-offenders. A large factor in how ex-offenders negotiate membership in CPA is the manner in which they absorb common rituals within CPA meetings. In Chapter 6, I detail a continuum of the eighteen members with high affiliation and successful stigma management strategies. I argue that for these eighteen members of CPA, group dynamic and internal frames of discussion help them form viable pathways to redemption (the faith driven struggle of desistance). First, CPA rituals such as contesting the state and diverse forms of interaction foster redemption scripts for persons who might normally not be able to form these scripts. One way that CPA facilitates redemption is by creating a context in which ex-offenders can consistently compare and contrast their own progress with the progress of other members. The disorder of CPA
helps provide order in the lives of some CPA members who lack confidence outside of the group but gain a positive self-identity by placing themselves in a position superior to some of the less successful ex-offenders in the group. Other members form redemption scripts by finding value in the ritual of interaction between ex-offenders and what CPA terms free worlders. I find that CPA meetings and events provide a context for ex-offenders that are angry at the system, and perceivers, to negotiate that anger in a safe space. This free worlder interaction can occur in a few different ways. First, ex-offenders can find redemption when they feel respect given to them by free worlders. This helps ex-offender release the fear of constant labeling. Secondly, ex-offenders can find redemption by demeaning free worlders. Ex-offenders are affected greatly by the mainstream justification ideologies that help maintain criminal stigma. When these members can experience dominance over free worlders, a group that can and will stigmatize criminality, it helps the ex-offenders free themselves from some of the labeling impacts that come with a criminal record.

A different way that CPA facilitates positive stigma management is through the use of redemptive contestation scripts. A common ritual of CPA membership is to contest state power in many different forms. These contestations range from criticism of criminal policy to revolutionary ideas that imply some degree of violence or civil disobedience. I conclude that for some members the highly negative contestation frames utilized within CPA is a pathway to redemption that is based on self-reliance. This finding counters a line of thought that would argue that “blaming” the state frees the individual of accountability and therefore justifies his further criminal action. My research, however, concludes that oftentimes these rituals of contestation free the ex-offender from reliance
on the state, therefore, strengthening their rituals of redemption. My data indicates that many ex-offenders experience anger with the criminal justice system during reentry because they rely on help from the state. The contestation frames in CPA allow members to distance themselves from the state. Realizing that the state does very little to help ex-offenders and often takes steps that end up being detrimental helps some members of CPA to rely on themselves for redemption. Positive forms of redemptive contestation form a secular religion where ex-offenders place themselves as the only barrier to redemption. Negative variations of redemptive contestation use contestation frames to place the state as an enemy. Placing the state as the enemy encourages ex-offenders to desist as a form of protest. In both positive and negative forms of redemptive contestation, ex-offenders transform anger toward the state into motivation to succeed.

A third way that CPA facilitates redemption is through the practice of *parrhesia*, or fearless speech. Some members of CPA come to the group with strong ideas about social justice, redemption and desistance. These members use the contestation frames of CPA, free forms of communication within the group, and an argumentative style of interaction to identify injustice. Some members of the group use CPA frames as a way of reminding themselves what priorities they have and what path they want to take in life. CPA serves as a parrhesiastes, which equates to being a policing agent for ex-offenders in their road to desistance and social justice.

The experiences of CPA members who maintain a high affiliation with the group and successfully manage stigma contributes to the literature on social psychology, social movements and criminology. By illustrating the ways that collectives geared toward
social change can benefit members at the individual level, my research contributes to our understanding of the desistance process, as it relates to stigma management.

My data also provides a useful contribution to the realm of social psychology. First, I find that members of CPA who maintained very low organizational affiliation with the group before leaving, yet successfully managed stigma, typically possessed some form of capital that made the contestation frames of CPA less useful. Some members leave CPA because they have supportive families and/or job skills that make it easier for them to manage the reentry process and maintain a positive self-identity. Other members leave CPA because they possess qualities such as fashion sense, good looks, and charisma that help them fit more easily into mainstream environments. These qualities, in turn, help the individuals create and maintain viable redemption scripts without the support of collective efforts such as social movement groups. These members, therefore, place a great deal of importance on meetings having more structure and taking more action, primarily because they are looking for a different type of success than the members profiled in Chapter 6. CPA is less satisfying to these members because they do not need, or gain for that matter, the same support as other members.

My data also indicates that some members leave the group even though they do not successfully manage stigma. Those members of CPA who had low organizational affiliation and failed stigma management fail to embrace CPA even though they may benefit from membership. Some individuals leave CPA because they possess such strong condemnation scripts they cannot successfully move past stigma. For these members, who often lack various forms of capital that could improve their chances of succeeding post-incarceration, CPA simply reaffirms the narratives that prevent them from
succeeding in the first place. Other individuals that leave CPA do so because they are committed to their own criminal lifestyle. Individuals with low affiliation that lack successful stigma management generally come to the group in search of immediate help, which they fail to receive. The frames of CPA are not appealing to individuals that identify their criminal past in a positive or acceptable light, indicating that social movements can only aid the stigma management process when a member wants to be helped in some way.

Lastly, I discuss members of CPA who maintain high organizational affiliation with the group yet fail at successfully managing their own stigma. Toch’s work indicates that persons only stay in a social movement if they gain from participation in the group. I find that while a large number of CPA members stay involved with the group because they receive social psychological benefits relevant to their own desistance process, other potential benefits to remaining in CPA exist. This means that some members will gain from CPA dynamics, but in a manner that does not aid the pathway to redemption. Some members use CPA frames to support their own condemnation scripts. While many members with strong condemnation scripts leave CPA because they gain very little from getting their own condemnation scripts reaffirmed, others actually use CPA to help foster condemnation scripts. I argue that persons are more likely to do this when they possess social capital that could help them desist from crime but for various reasons prefer to continue criminal careers. CPA contestation frames help these members to justify their own recidivism. These individuals take contestation frames and use them to add strength and validation to their hopelessness. Other members use the group as an opportunity to
push their own specific contestation agendas. In an abstract sense these offenders are impacted by CPA in a similar way to the success stories of Chapter 6, however their specific benefit from group is substantively different.

**RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

With three years of observational data, forty-one in-depth interviews, and over one thousand units of archival research, I provide an organizational case study with rich and diverse data. The findings of my participatory action research expand the current body of literature on social movements, social psychology and criminology. The highly volatile nature of field research with a stigmatized population can, and has, yielded worthwhile and meaningful results. However, the comparative advantage that my research model has over other explorations into ex-offender identity work and desistance also comes with costs that can affect the overall quality of the data and the generalizability of the findings.

One area of limitation for my research is my access to the field and ability to establish trust. I put a great deal of effort into establishing rapport with CPA members and gaining entree to the social world of CPA members. I argue that identity work of ex-offenders, especially the identity work that occurs completely free of state control and surveillance is the most important area of identity work. I attempted to provide this sort of environment during my data collection, however, all members of CPA were aware that while I was participating in the group, I was also doing research on the group. It is likely that some of the research subjects performed for me in positive or negative ways, based on the identity they were trying to project. In addition, it was clear to me that some
members of the group never gave me full access their perspectives on the group. This problem of trust seemed especially relevant to the set of members that I identify as having high affiliation but unsuccessful stigma management. While members such as Trishelle and Mitchell granted me interviews and would talk on occasion, I rarely gained insight into their private lives the way that I did with the members profiled in Chapter 6 on success with stigma management. I also must acknowledge that there are relevant limitations that can be attributed to this being my first fieldwork with ex-offenders. Although I critically evaluate stigma attached to ex-offenders I cannot honestly claim to exist outside of the perceiver role; I occasionally allowed my ideas about ex-offenders to impact the quality of my research. In the first year of data collection I twice turned down offers to have planning meetings at my house. These would have been excellent opportunities to establish trust with the group. I must accept that part of my resistance to hosting a meeting was general anxiety about having persons convicted of theft, assault, sexual assault, and murder in my home. While this anxiety declined dramatically with time, my role as perceiver established certain power dynamics in my first year of observation.

Other limitations in my ability to gain entree include my placement in a number of social hierarchies that exist in the United States. As a well-educated white male with no criminal record who is firmly entrenched in the middle to upper middle class, there were a number of barriers that subjects had to cross to trust my ability to understand their stories and experiences. While the majority of CPA members are Caucasian, many of the more active members of the group are African Americans and Latinos from very poor backgrounds. Bringing further complications to this is the fact that most of the white
members of the group were older than me by a decade or more. With very few exceptions, I typically had to overcome two or more of the following differences: (1) age; (2) current socio-economic status; (3) inherited socio-economic status; (4) educational attainment; (5) religion; (6) race; (7) ethnicity; (8) criminal history; (9) family background; and (10) current residence. While the vast majority of these problems were minimized over time as I proved myself to be a knowledgeable outsider, I must acknowledge them as barriers to my ability to fully collect data. Also, I had a great deal of trouble gaining access to members with low affiliation. While this problem should be expected since high affiliation with CPA was my primary asset in gaining interviews, it means that the groups I profile in Chapter 7 that have low affiliation should be understood as a purposive, convenience sample.

**DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY**

My research contributes to the literature on desistance, social movements, and social psychology by indicating contexts in which a stigmatized population can improve its ability to cope with and overcome the negative social implications of spoiled social identities. My expansion of the literature in these fields of social and behavioral science indicates the need for further research.

First, I feel that my findings encourage future research on identity work by ex-offenders. I extend Maruna’s work on the difference in identity rituals performed by ex-offenders that desist and those that continue or return to criminal careers. My work considers the source of ex-offender identity rituals and identifies social movements as a context that can foster rituals of redemption and complement pre-existing stigma.
management scripts that lie within offenders about to begin the reentry process. One contribution of my work is that social movements can help ex-offenders that lack proper skills (e.g. job training and education) or social bonds (e.g. family and/or intimate relationships) by serving as a surrogate for social interaction. Maruna (2001) argues that the biggest difference between individuals that fail and succeed with the reentry process is identity work. Further research should focus on ex-offenders who lack qualities that current sociological literature considers most important to successful reentry. By identifying through ethnographic inquiry what separates successful from unsuccessful ex-offenders that would be predicted to fail, sociologists can form a more comprehensive understanding of the reentry process.

Second, my results indicate that there is a need for more research on the interaction between social movement dynamics and the identity of individual members. There are a number of organizational level factors that prevent CPA from reaching its full structural potential as a prisoner rights organization. The fact that individuals exclusively interested in successful lobbying for prisoner reform would not be satisfied by CPA makes it easier to isolate the social psychological elements of CPA participation. Further participatory action research focused on membership in more powerful and structurally sound social movement groups would help expand the literature on ex-offender participation in prisoner rights groups.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

My research contributes to the sociological, psychological and criminological understanding of the desistance process by demonstrating the ways in which some ex-
offenders seek social outlets to better understand their own stigma. I find that social movement groups are an excellent context for group members to develop effective stigma management scripts because: (a) social movements imply a fight for or action toward social change which empowers the ex-offender; (b) they provide a great deal of social interaction that allows members to discuss and negotiate their own understanding of criminality and state action; and (c) they provide regular rituals to affirm and practice the perspectives they develop on criminality. These findings should guide future policy and research aimed toward the desistance process.
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