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## The Invisible War: A Portrait Of Structural Racism and Mental Health in the Life of a Formerly Incarcerated U.S. Born Africana Man

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THE INVISIBLE WAR  
A PORTRAIT OF STRUCTURAL RACISM AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THE LIFE OF A  
FORMERLY INCARCERATED U.S. BORN AFRICANA MAN

by

TARELL KYLES

Under the Direction of Makungu Akinyela PhD

ABSTRACT

This study examines the ways in which a formerly incarcerated U.S. born Africana man age 47 perceives, interprets, and copes with being criminalized and disenfranchised by interacting institutions which support white domination and black subordination. The focal point of inquiry is an analysis of the reverberating mental health impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system. Utilizing portraiture and person-environment fit theory, this study presents a multivocal portrait of a man, his life, his family, and his community impacted by the stress/strain of navigating environments characterized by structural racism and inequality. The study seeks to add to the relevant bodies of knowledge a more nuanced and contextual examination of the negative mental health impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system, which will inform policy and advocacy issues, as well as future interventions designed to empower historically marginalized populations in the U.S.

INDEX WORDS: New Jim Crow, Incarceration, Mental health, Systemic Racism, Critical race theory, Portraiture

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TARELL KYLES

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my beautiful fiancé, Shamora Barnard, and our wonderful son Jayden. This work is also dedicated to the many U.S. born Africana families and communities where minds, bodies, and spirits still too often become collateral damage in The Invisible War.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Africana Studies department at GSU. Thank you to those that fought for our space to exist. May it remain a place where great scholar-activists can be forged. A special thank you to my elders, to those who have guided me, pushed me, and challenged me. Dr. Anthony Hatch, Dr. Michael Smanga, Dr. Sarita K. Davis, Dr. Makungu Akinyela, Dr. Brian McGregor, Sandra Barnhill, Dr. Jonathan Gayles, and Dr. Akinyele Omuwale Umoja. Thank you for aiding me in asking the right questions.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Though overtly racist behavior can still be observed and experienced in the U.S., structural racism is less about individual behavior and more about the totality of social structures, institutions, including ideological and philosophical constructs and assumptions, that enforce white domination and U.S. born African subordination. It becomes visible in its effects throughout society, where emerging from slavery, U.S. born African people have historically lagged whites in measures of socioeconomic success and environmental stability. Rakesh Kochhar and Richard Fry (2014) in their analysis of data from the Federal Reserve's Survey of Consumer Finances for the Pew Research Center, found that the wealth of white households was 13 times the median wealth of U.S. born African households in 2013, compared with eight times the wealth in 2010, and combined with gentrification and racial discrimination in home ownership markets (Caccavallo, 1981), education (Asante, 1991), and labor markets (Bonacich, 1976) the breadth and persistence of structural racism and inequality in the U.S. becomes clearer, but there is perhaps no arena of social interaction more obviously beset by structural racism, and its negative mental health impacts, than the U.S. criminal justice system (CJS).

The literature regarding the intersections of race, crime and criminal justice is undergoing a growth process that has recently expanded in the wake of the disproportionate incarceration of U.S. born African men. "From the mid-1970s to the mid- '80s, America's incarceration rate doubled, from about 150 people per 100,000 to about 300 per 100,000. From the mid- '80s to the mid- '90s it doubled again. By 2007, it had reached a historic high of 767 people per 100,000, before registering a modest decrease to 707 people per 100,000 in 2012. In absolute terms, America's prison and jail population from 1970 until today has increased sevenfold, from some

300,000 people to 2.2 million. In 2010, one third of all U.S. born African male high school dropouts between the ages of 20 and 39 were imprisoned, compared with only 13 percent of their white peers” (Coates, 2015). University of New Orleans law professor Bill Quigley estimates that, “if present trends continue, 1 of every 4 U.S. born African males born this decade can expect to go to prison in his lifetime. This figure contrasts sharply with the U.S. Census Bureau’s approximation that U.S. born African people only make up 13% of the population. Racism may well be the biggest crime in the criminal legal system (Quigley, 2016). Quigley maintains that, “When *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954, about 100,000 U.S. born African people were in prison. Now there are about 800,000 U.S. born African people in jails and prisons; around 538,000 in prisons, over 263,000 in local jails. Additionally, U.S. born African men are nearly six times as likely to be incarcerated as white men according to The Sentencing Project (2015).

In 1998, 55% of juvenile arrests for violent crimes involved white youth, and 42% involved U.S. born African youth, although they only make up about 15% of the juvenile population (Snyder, 1999), and regarding structural racism via the CJS, Gelman, Fagan, and Kiss (2012) found in their analysis of New York City’s “stop and frisk protocols, that persons of African and Hispanic descent were stopped more frequently than whites, even after controlling for precinct variability and race-specific estimates of crime participation. Harris (1997) in his analysis of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Whren v. United States* where police used traffic violations as a pretext to stop a car without probable cause or reasonable suspicion, cautions; “Despite the words “equal justice under law” carved into the stone of the Supreme Court itself and the defendant-petitioners presenting both arguments—almost arbitrary power over any driver inherent in the “could have” approach and the racially biased use of traffic stops—to the Court,

The Court paid little attention to these obvious implications of its decision. Whren was more than a missed opportunity for the Court to rein in some police practices that strike at the heart of the ideas of freedom and equal treatment; Whren represents a clear step in the other direction—toward authoritarianism, toward racist policing, and toward a view of black and brown people as criminals, rather than citizens.”

The effects of structural racism have been shown to have negative mental health impacts on U.S. born African people. The available scientific evidence suggests that, through the constriction of socioeconomic mobility, confinement to poor or inadequate living conditions, discrimination, and the acceptance or internalization of negative cultural stereotypes structural racism can adversely affect the mental health status of U.S. born African people (R. Williams, D., & Williams-Morris, R., 2000). Along with prior incarceration, younger age, male gender, and modifiable risk factors like co-occurring SUDs (substance use disorders), lack of Medicaid insurance, untreated schizophrenia, and homelessness, race has been identified as a risk factor for incarceration (Mukku, et.al. 2012). Incarceration itself leads to risk factors such as unemployment, economic stress, substance abuse, marital conflicts, victimization, and low academic achievement (Freudenberg, 2001; Pettit & Western, 2004; Smith, 2008). Research also suggests that these negative effects are concentrated amongst boys who have a significant chance of also being imprisoned, and with roughly around 1.2 million or 1 in 9 U.S. born African children having an incarcerated parent, it is easy to see how the cycle may simply be repeating itself. Those who can return home often simply return to the same socioeconomic and educational wastelands, making formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men a virtually incarcerated group (Western, 2015).

From W.E.B. DuBois and Monroe Work's (1901) social disorganization analysis of the disproportionate representation of U.S. born African men in the convict lease system to Michelle Alexander's (2011) *The New Jim Crow*, scholars have analyzed structural racism via the CJS, but there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding the various ways in which structural racism via the CJS may be negatively impacting the mental health of formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men and their families. In addition to an overview of the social concern and responsibility regarding this topic, this chapter also covers some specific methodological and theoretical considerations as well as the scope, limitations, and delimitations of the current study. Utilizing the methodology of portraiture and person-environment fit theory, this study frames mental health in a social, political, and cultural context, while seeking to examine the complexities of lives and relationships impacted by the criminal justice system within the broader context of a society characterized by racialized and systemic inequalities. In what ways, might the racialized and asymmetrical treatment of U.S. born African men in criminal justice processing be negatively impacting their mental health as well as the mental health of their families and communities? Further, this study seeks to add to the relevant bodies of knowledge some contextual examinations of the negative mental health impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system. There is an increasing amount of empirical data regarding the racialized criminalization of U.S. born African people, however there is considerably less data which speaks to the mental health consequences of it.

## **1.1 Background**

Though some politicians are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the failures of "tough on crime" corrections reforms, reforms that have left the U.S. with the highest per capita incarcerated population (save the tiny island of Seychelles), many have failed to reckon with its

history or with the racialized and structural inequalities underlying its existence (Coates, 2015). The social order of the United States of America is one characterized by a deep structural racism that has negative mental health consequences for U.S. born African men and their families. Contrary to rational-legal orientations toward the criminal justice system; which fail to locate criminal justice activity within its larger social, cultural, and economic contexts, criminal justice functions “within a societal framework and reflects the value choices of its operation. Thus, the sources of authority within society, order the way in which the operations of the criminal process are carried out (Kraska, Brent, 2011).

Sociologist Joe R. Feagin (2014) reminds us that, “the U.S. Constitution which embraced slavery and embedded the global racist order in the U.S., remains the nation’s legal, political, and—to a substantial degree—moral foundation. Its overtly racist provisions, though overridden by later constitutional amendments, have not been deleted.” One of the most firmly established and frequently reported patterns in the distribution of health status in the United States is that U.S. born African people have higher rates of death, disease and disability than whites (Williams, Yu, Jackson, Anderson, 1997). This pattern has been documented for over 150 years (Krieger, 1987) and in 1990 U.S. born African people had higher rates than whites for 13 of the 15 leading causes of death in the United States (National Center for Health Statistics, 1994).

The impact of structural racism on the lives of U.S. born African people is not limited to the physiological. The available scientific evidence suggests that racism can adversely affect mental health status in at least three ways. First, racism in societal institutions can lead to truncated socioeconomic mobility, differential access to desirable resources (person-environment fit theory posits that this can be a critical pathway to stress), and poor living conditions that can adversely affect mental health. Second, experiences of discrimination can induce physiological

and psychological reactions that can lead to adverse changes in mental health status. Third, in race-conscious societies, the acceptance of negative cultural stereotypes can lead to unfavorable self-evaluations that have deleterious effects on psychological well-being (R. Williams, D., & Williams-Morris, R., 2000).

In his discussion of psychology's traditional emphasis solely on the individual, an emphasis that he states "ill prepared psychology in the post-World War II period for the public arena," Sarason (1981) maintains that, "no one in this country was unaffected by the war. For millions of people family life was disrupted as one or more of a family's members (sons, fathers, close relatives) were gone for months or years, died, or came back a casualty or stranger, and many who remained at home also changed and were strangers to the returning veterans." His point underscores the ripple effect of trauma which reverberates not just throughout an individual's life and psyche, but through the individual's family and community as well. Much like the returning World War II veterans whose lives, families, and communities were disrupted, presenting new challenges which changed the face of mental health in the United States, formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men, and their communities, face a similar disruption of family life and increase in personal disturbances. These challenges mandate research into new ways of perceiving the interrelationship between the structural racism of the criminal justice system and its impact on the mental health of U.S. born African people. Just as it was obvious then, that mental health solutions could not simply deal with the returning veterans without addressing their families and their communities, so too must our analyses of the issues facing formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men include their families and communities.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system, wears many masks. Epp and Moody (2014) assert that, “In sheer numbers, no form of government control comes close to the police stop. Their study revealed stop and frisk policies where U.S. born African men are stopped at twice the rate of whites (Epp & Moody, 2014) and a study in Connecticut found racial disparities in traffic stops during the daytime, when the race of a driver can be seen, but not at night (Majerus-Collins, 2016). Once stopped, 3 times as many U.S. born African people and Hispanics were searched as white drivers according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice statistics (Langton, L.; Durose, R.M, 2013). The Center for Policing Equity found robust racial disparities across multiple levels of force severity. Police have been found more likely to use Tasers, dogs, pepper spray, physical force, and lethal force against U.S. born African people than whites (Goff, et.al., Center for Policing Equity, 2016). Additionally, U.S. born African people have been found more likely than whites to be incarcerated while awaiting trial (Travis & Western, 2014), face mandatory minimum sentences (Rehavi, Starr, 2012), and over 65 percent of prisoners serving life without parole for nonviolent offenses are U.S. born African people (American Civil Liberties Union, 2013). Structural racism is present at every stage in criminal justice processing.

While structural racism via the criminal justice system represents a significant manifestation of racialized social control in the U.S. this study makes clear that structural racism is pervasive, impacting all aspects of U.S. born African life. In addition to structural racism via the criminal justice system, the literature regarding racism’s impact on the mental health of U.S. born African people indicates that with regard to institutional and collective racism, elderly U.S. born African men had significantly higher levels of race-related stress than elderly U.S. born

Africana women. This result was not surprising given that U.S. born Africana men have traditionally had relatively harsher experiences with societal racism and oppression (Utsey, et.al., 2002). In fact, several authors have linked the higher incidences of stress-related diseases (e.g., hypertension, coronary heart disease, and cancer) pandemic among U.S. born Africana men to their chronic exposure to racism and discrimination (Broman, 1997; McCord & Freeman, 1990; Outlaw, 1993). Franklin (1999) posited that U.S. born Africana men because of the constant onslaught of racism and oppression, experience a sense of invisibility. Overall, these findings support the contention that U.S. born Africana men are particularly vulnerable to the stressful effects of racism and oppression (Utsey, et.al. 2002). The study's results also indicated that institutional racism alone (independent of age, sex, income, education, and the other IRRS subscales) was a significant predictor of the MCS for elderly U.S. born Africana men. The MCS is a composite summary measure of one's vitality, social functioning, emotional well-being, and mental health (Utsey, et.al. 2002).

Racism as structural via the CJS negatively impacts the lives of U.S. born Africana men as well as their families and communities in various ways. In fact, there are so many U.S. born Africana people incarcerated that current studies of the economic prospects for this group are distorted by the sheer numbers of individuals rendered invisible through incarceration. The picture emerges as far worse than reported when researchers begin to add the incarcerated to their theoretical populations. According to the Washington Post, "America has locked up so many U.S. born Africana people it has warped our collective sense of reality (Guo, 2016). The mental health dimensions of racialized social control represent a still developing body of knowledge, but in addition to U.S. born Africana people being much more likely than whites to

be involuntarily committed to mental institutions, they are also more likely to be processed by criminal justice entities rather than mental health professionals (Grekin, et.al. 1994).

The prevalence rate of severe mental disorder is significantly higher in a typical urban jail than in the general population (Teplin,1990), and in a society characterized by a race-consciousness which supports white domination and U.S. born Africana subordination, the acceptance of negative cultural stereotypes (internalized racism) often generates negative self-evaluations that have harmful effects on psychological well-being (R. Williams, D., & Williams-Morris, R., 2000). Of the statistically significant variables that helped to predict aggressive behavior, internalized racism had the biggest effect size. An aggressive response to shame also had a significant effect size, and negative self-concepts associated with internalized racism can become deeply rooted in the minds of U.S. born Africana youth, negatively influencing their mental health and behavior well into their adult years (Bryant, 2011). Furthermore, higher rates of admission of mentally ill persons to prisons may in part be the result of the differential incarceration rate between races (Grekin, et.al. 1994).

U.S. born Africana men with low levels of education and socioeconomic status make up the large portion of those imprisoned for increasingly longer periods of time. Petit & Western (2004) estimate that among men born between 1965 and 1969, 3 percent of whites and 20 percent of U.S. born Africana people had served time in prison by their early thirties. The risks of incarceration are also highly stratified by education. Among U.S. born Africana men born during this period, 30 percent of those without college education and nearly 60 percent of high school dropouts went to prison by 1999. Many of the communities in which these men live are already bereft of resources, particularly money, a competitive education, and the opportunities to achieve. Criminal justice processing tends to only exacerbate these deficiencies for those men

who return post incarceration. In fact, Wacquant (2000) asserts that prison functions literally as a “surrogate ghetto,” in that “both belong to the same class of organizations, namely, institutions of forced confinement: The ghetto is a manner of “social prison” while the prison functions as a “judicial ghetto.” Both are entrusted with enclosing a historically stigmatized population so as to neutralize the material and/or symbolic threat that it poses for the broader society from which it has been extruded” (Wacquant, 2000). This study utilizes person-environment fit theory to examine the psychological, and behavioral impact of what Wacquant (2000) refers to as these interactive and “peculiar institutions.”

Studies have shown that trauma and PTSD are prevalent in low SES low education urban black communities (Beckett, 2014), where structural racism (particularly via the criminal justice system) negatively impacts community members access to adequate employment and social advancement opportunities (Cooke, 2005), political influence (Bobo, L. D., & Thompson, V. 2006), educational advancement (Asante, 1991), and mental health treatment ((Grekin M.D., et.al. 1994). Additionally, the misfit between individuals and their environment itself is a source of stress/strain that may compound the symptoms of trauma which can lead to PTSD and addiction.

With an increasing amount of empirical data regarding the racialized criminalization of U.S. born African people, and evidence of the stress/strain of being socially, politically, and economically confined by various forms of structural racism (slavery, Jim Crow, the ghetto), there remains a gap in understanding how the formerly incarcerated and their kin perceive their interactions with these environments. This study examines the mental health dimensions of the complexities of lives and relationships impacted by structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system. In keeping with an ecological approach, through the methodology of

portraiture, this study closely examined challenges and lived experiences (from a standpoint which blends the researcher's and the respondents' analyses) within U.S. born Africana communities, with implications for other communities of color disproportionately impacted by structural racism via the CJS. This approach will inform future interventions and guide empowerment efforts for historically marginalized populations in the U.S. Employing life-history, multiple interviews with a formerly incarcerated U.S. born Africana man, as well as interviews with his extended kinship network and some elements of ethnographic analysis, this study produced a portrait of those U.S. born Africana people who are surviving The Invisible War.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to assist in filling the gaps in understandings of how formerly incarcerated U.S. born Africana men and their kin perceive their interactions within social environments characterized by structural racism broadly, including but not limited to structural racism via the criminal justice system.

This study takes an ecological approach to research design, applying the qualitative methodology of portraiture towards a final manuscript (a portrait) that can be used to inform community-based as well as policy-based interventions. This approach addresses the individual in a larger context. utilizing the qualitative methods of portraiture, which combines open ended interview questions, life history, and naturalistic inquiry (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005) to address the interrelated problems regarding structural racism, particularly via the CJS, and its mental health consequences for formerly incarcerated U.S. born Africana men, their families, and their communities.

## 1.4 Research Design

The methodology of portraiture represents a blending of the qualitative techniques associated with life history, and naturalistic inquiry while drawing inspiration from ethnographic approaches. In this study, the methodology of portraiture is applied to a case study format. The design of this study features three separate life history interviews containing open-ended and pre-prepared questions for the formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man, glean his life history while focusing on his experiences and perceptions of, as well as his interactions with the criminal justice system. Following the initial life history interviews, the PI asked the participant's permission to speak with other family members regarding his life. In accordance with portraiture's emphasis on constructing a coherent narrative (portrait) using multilayered perspectives, these limited interviews with the participant's adult family members were used to map the principal participant's social life. These limited interviews also served, in part, as an internal validity check on the data provided by the formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man. These interviews were designed to obtain the family members' experiences and perceptions of some of the major life events detailed by their formerly incarcerated male family member, focusing primarily on the impact of incarceration on relationships.

Interview questions were based upon the relevant constructs of P-E fit theory, namely the misfit of resources in the environment (extrinsic and intrinsic supplies and rewards) versus the person's needs i.e. food, shelter, money, social involvement, and the opportunity to achieve (Harrison, 1978), and the resultant stress/strain (psychological: dissatisfaction, anxiety, dysphoria, complaints of insomnia, restlessness, physiological; compromised immune system functioning, and behavioral; smoking, overeating, absenteeism, frequent utilization of health care services (Caplan, R. D. 1987).

Additionally, to further examine these mental health content dimensions, the PI administered the OQ - 45.2 which was evaluated by the committee chair Dr. Makungu Akinyela. The OQ – 45.2 is a 45 item self-report instrument requiring a subject to rate their functioning on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument is designed to assess common symptoms across a range of adult mental disorders and syndromes, including stress related illness. The instrument particularly identifies stress in three areas; Symptom Distress; Interpersonal Relations; and Social Role distress. Field notes took the form of a research diary designed to aid in the promotion of reflexivity in the research process.

An exit meeting was scheduled in which the primary participant was able to reflect on his experiences in the study. While the study aimed to produce a “portrait” which weaves together and forefronts the perspectives, voices, and experiences of both researcher and respondent, there were limitations involved. The scope of this study was confined by the limits and resources available within my graduate program. These include time and funding limits.

In particular, the issues of reflexivity and voice in research are foregrounded. This research is a study of the negative mental health impacts of structural racism both broadly, as it manifests in U.S. society, as well as via the criminal justice system. The findings were developed into a layered, textured portrait.

Contrary to FW English’s (2000) critique of portraiture, the “authority” of the portraitist is neither arbitrary nor unilateral. The portraitist worked; in the context of a critical race lens, on behalf of the respondents.

For so long the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of people of color have been devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within the social sciences, particularly in ethnography (Bernal, 2002), but portraiture presents a unique opportunity to balance these inequities by

prioritizing more egalitarian relationship between researcher and participant. Distinct from traditional narrative-biographical research, portraiture represents a blending of qualitative methodologies, as the researcher in the field employs life history, naturalistic inquiry, and ethnographic methods, while drawing on the visual aesthetic metaphor of the portrait (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005).

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is a part of the existing body of knowledge which examines the intersection of race/racism, criminal justice activity and mental health, but it is unique in its methodological approach to these intersecting phenomena. This study contributes to future generations, particularly in the fields of African-American Studies, Criminal Justice, Pan-African Studies and Community Psychology, from which it derives its ecological focus as well as its commitment to the empowerment of those communities impacted most disproportionately by structural racism via the CJS. This solution-oriented perspective is reflected in the design and methodology of this study in that it informs the “implicit and explicit blurring of the line between “expert” and “ordinary” folk, to construct collaborative, participatory and action oriented scholarship (Rappaport, 1987)

“The transformation of prison policy at the tum of the twenty-first century is most accurately characterized as the mass incarceration of U.S. born Africana people. Though the initial prison boom in the late 1960s paralleled increased crime rates, “Imprisonment rates fell from the 1960s through the early ’70s, even as violent crime increased. From the mid-’70s to the late ’80s, both imprisonment rates and violent-crime rates rose. Then, from the early ’90s to the present, violent-crime rates fell while imprisonment rates increased” (Coates, 2015). Mandatory minimums, three-strikes laws, determinant sentencing, and other tough on crime policies

skyrocketed incarceration rates at the disproportionate expense of U.S. born African American communities. “From the mid-1970s to the mid-’80s, America’s incarceration rate doubled. From the mid-’80s to the mid-’90s, it doubled again. Then it went still higher” (Coates, 2015). Though tough on crime policies disproportionately impacted U. S. born African American men, the war on drugs proved to be the main vehicle for the mass incarceration of U.S. born African American people, particularly prime age adult U.S. born African American men. According to Michelle Alexander (2011), though “the notion that most drug use and sales happens in the ghetto is pure fiction, U.S. born African American men have been admitted to state prison on drug charges at a rate that is more than thirteen times higher than white men.” She cites the overrepresentation of U.S. born African American men in drug war arrests as “the major reason that 1 in every 14 U.S. born African American men was behind bars in 2006, compared with 1 in 106 white men, and for these same men, ages twenty to thirty-five 1 in 9 were away from their families, behind bars, with far more under some form of penal control (probation or parole).

This mass incarceration of U.S. born African American men coincides with a new era in criminal justice research (Roberts, D.E. 2004). This study adds to the ever-increasing body of knowledge regarding the collateral effects of structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system. This study also focuses on the population hardest hit by mass incarceration, as well as emphasizing the mental health of a population that has historically been underserved both individually and collectively.

The negative mental health impacts of structural racism, particularly via the CJS, are significant to U.S. born African American communities, because it is from these communities that a significant number of people are taken, and it is to these communities that many of them return. The ecological approach employed here focuses on the fact that individual mental health has

consequences for familial and community mental health as well. It recognizes the interdependent nature of human development in the context of the processes of interaction between and within families and communities (Shinn, Toohey, 2003). Despite the notion that making these men invisible through incarceration makes society safer and more cohesive, the reverberating mental health impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system affect the families, and communities of U.S. born African people, which invariably has serious consequences for the broader society. Expectantly, and to varying degrees, participants came to better understand their environments in terms of their neighborhoods, and communities as well as the broader society in the U.S. while becoming more familiar with the social structures that impact their lived experiences. This study has deep implications for community psychology embedded in its ecological approach to research design. This approach addresses individuals in a larger context, invoking person-environment theory and utilizing the qualitative methods of portraiture, in an effort to simultaneously address the interrelated problems regarding structural racism via the CJS and its mental health consequences for formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men, their families, and their communities.

## **1.6 Nature of the Study**

The ecological approach, in addition to addressing the interdependent and contextual aspects of the research problem, calls on the researcher to be proactive and prepared for change to occur within the research settings, as well as within himself and the respondents. Within this approach, data should be collected from interdependent relationships (Kelly, 1966). Person-environment fit theory informs the design's focus on the perceptual, or subjective experiences of the respondents, as the P-E fit theory literature identifies subjective P-E fit as the critical pathway to mental health and other dimensions of well-being (Edwards, Caplan, Harrison, 1998). The

qualitative methods of portraiture utilize open ended interview questions, life history, and naturalistic inquiry (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005) to simultaneously examine the interrelated problems and solutions regarding structural racism via the CJS and its mental health consequences for formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men, their families.

It is portraiture's layered methodological approach, as opposed to the positivist orientations of quantitative methodologies, or the less complex qualitative methodologies, that features most prominently the perspectives, voices, and experiences of both researcher and respondent and accomplishes the research goal of constructing a portrayal which will support scientifically oriented social action and social change starting within the communities of those most impacted.

## **1.7 Research Questions**

Structural racism generates stress and places lower SES, lower education, U.S. born African men at risk of negative mental health impacts which reverberate throughout their families and communities. This is especially evident in the ways in which structural racism creates economically disparate conditions within U.S. born African communities characterized by low SES and lower levels of education, ripening them for criminal justice harvesting.

What are the mental health impacts of structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system on U.S. born African men and their families? How do U.S. born African men and their families perceive the mental health impacts of their experiences with structural racism, both broadly, and via the criminal justice system? Shelly P. Harrell's (2002) landmark study, *A Multidimensional Conceptualization of Racism-Related Stress: Implications for the Well-Being of People of Color*, posited a comprehensive framework for the study of race related stress. The conceptualization focused on multicultural mental health as it relates to the stress process, with

special attention paid to the social and historical context of the problems associated with race related stress, as well as culture based variables that mediate the relationship between racism and well-being. Her framework was aimed primarily at informing mental health practice, and was like the present study, solution oriented. Harrell was adamant that racism was never to be reduced to experiences of stress because it exists structurally, becoming in many cases virtually invisible, yet exerting subtle, micro aggressive pressure on mental health professionals to be silent about it (Harrell, 2002). Harrell's study remains a comprehensive look at race related stress/strain, but the ways in which structural racism via the criminal justice system generates stress for U.S. born African men within their immediate environments remains open for examination and analysis.

“There is a growing body of literature exploring the lives of men who were incarcerated and their families. However, research directions that may offer new information about these families include exploring mental health issues of men who were formerly incarcerated, investigating wellness and/or illness patterns in families that are able to stay together following incarceration, and identifying the incidence and management of chronic illness in the women and children of men who were incarcerated, particularly those from those groups that are disproportionately represented in the prison system (e.g., U.S. born African people, Latino, Native American)” (Cooke, 2005).

This study aids in the construction of knowledge regarding the aforementioned families, as well as exploring the mental health issues of formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men. This study adds to the relevant bodies of knowledge by posing contextual inquiries about the mental health impacts of structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice

system on U.S. born African men and their families, and the ways in which these U.S. born African men and their families perceive the mental health impacts of their experiences.

## **1.8 Theory**

There are various theories of stress, and many of them recognize the primacy of the relationship between individuals and their environments in understanding both the nature and consequences of stress/strain. According to Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison (1998), from Type-A behavior (Friedman & Rosenman, 1959) to coping styles (Menaghan, 1983) there have been many contributions to the body of knowledge concerning person constructs and their relationship to stress and strain. Conversely, the environment has also seen numerous constructions, from stressful life events (Rabkin, & Struening, 1976) to chronic stressors such as role conflict and ambiguity (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). These theoretical constructs are derived from psychology's interactive perspective which posits that behavior, attitudes, and well-being are determined jointly by the person and environment (Lewin, 1951; Magnusson & Endler, 1977; Pervin, 1989). "The core premise of P-E fit theory is that stress arises not from the person or environment separately, but rather their misfit or incongruence with one another (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998).

In the 1970s Derrick Bell began using the term, Critical race theory (CRT). It first emerged as a counterlegal scholarship to confront positivist and liberal legal discourse regarding civil rights. Critical Race theorists illuminated the fact that whites continued to wield disproportionate power and enjoy superior standards of living, despite the legal reforms of the civil rights era. Critical Race theory views classical liberal ideals such as meritocracy, equal opportunity, and colorblind justice, as constructs that actually serve the white elite by cloaking and reinforcing society's deep structural inequalities. CRT departs from mainstream legal

scholarship by sometimes employing storytelling. CRT argues that, racism is not solely a matter of bad behavior by individual racists. Rather, racism is embedded in the very attitudes and institutions of the United States (Billings, 1998).

This study adopts critical race theory's assumptions as a context for the study of the mental health impacts of structural racism broadly, as well as its manifestations via the criminal justice system. "CRT offers a critique of civil rights legal reforms by noting that they failed to fundamentally challenge racial inequality" (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008). CRT is a necessary component to this study in this era of colorblind rhetoric, where structural racism has assumed a cloak of invisibility. As Brewer and Heitzeg (2008) note in their CRT work regarding the racialization of crime and punishment, "As movements for abolition and civil rights ended the institutions of slavery, lynching, and legalized segregation, new and more indirect mechanisms for perpetuating systemic racism and its economic underpinnings emerged. In this era of colorblind racism, there has been a corresponding shift from de jure racism codified explicitly into the law and legal systems to a de facto racism where people of color, especially African-American people, are subject to unequal protection of the laws, excessive surveillance, extreme segregation, and neo-slave labor via incarceration, all in the name of crime control (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008). This study's social justice orientation requires a focus on the lives and experiences of those most affected by structural racism via the criminal justice system. "Social justice requires that the role of civil justice in racialization be made transparent. This requires social justice projects that emanate from the micro level, from stories and struggle" (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008).

P-E fit theory posits that stress arises when the environment does not provide adequate supplies to meet the person's needs (Harrison, 1978, 1985). This study focuses on the objective

and subjective dimensions of P-E fit as well as contact with reality and the accuracy of self-assessment, with attention to the subjective (perceptual) as it has been identified in the literature as the critical pathway to mental health and other dimensions of well-being (Edwards, Caplan, Harrison, 1998). With a critical race orientation to P-E fit theory, we view interactions between U.S. born African men, their families and the criminal justice system's structural racism as stress generating, with each step in the criminal justice process placing the men (and to varying extents their families) in environments where their subjective appraisal indicates that supplies are insufficient to fulfill their needs. Due to the misfit between the men's (and their families') needs and the available resources in their environments, which become impaired if not further impaired by their interactions with the criminal justice system, their mental health may be negatively impacted.

## **1.9 Definitions**

structural racism: the totality of social structures, institutions, including ideological and philosophical constructs and assumptions, that enforce white domination and African subordination. Structural racism represents the relationship between U.S. born African people and the social order of the United States. Even in the absence of overt racialization and discrimination, it can be observed in individual, institutional, and state behaviors toward U.S. born African people. It can be observed, for example, in interactions between police and white offenders, that police behavior tends to promote the preservation of life, as opposed to police interactions with African people that tend to promote the destruction of it. Recall that, The Center for Policing Equity found robust racial disparities across multiple levels of force severity. Police have been found more likely to use various forms of force against African offenders than white offenders. (Goff, et.al., Center for Policing Equity, 2016).

- criminal justice system: the numerous interrelated agencies (police, courts, corrections) that work together to comprise U.S. activities regarding responses to crime and criminal justice (Kraska, Brent, 2011).
- U.S. born Africana people: people of African descent born in the U.S.
- mental health: a person's condition with regard to their cognitive, psychological and emotional well-being. Mental health represents how we think, feel, and behave, be it positive or negative. The primary inquiry regarding mental health is; Are these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors life-affirming or destructive? Mental health is typically measured through questions such as: Are you sleeping well? Are you experiencing rapid weight loss or weight gain? Are you experiencing or perpetuating episodes of domestic violence? Do you often feel anxious, nervous, sad, or frustrated? Do you suffer from substance use disorder (SUD: According to the DSM-5, a diagnosis of substance use disorder is based upon evidence of impaired control, social impairment, risky use and pharmacological criteria)?
  - well-being: the state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy
  - Constructs: Stress/Strain: Psychological (dissatisfaction, anxiety, dysphoria, complaints of insomnia, restlessness)
  - Physiological (compromised immune system functioning) (did anyone become ill during this experience?) Behavioral (smoking, overeating, absenteeism, frequent utilization of health care services) responses generated when the environment does not provide adequate resources to meet the person's needs (Harrison, 1978, 1985).
  - Resources: extrinsic and intrinsic supplies and rewards that may fulfill the person's needs i.e. food, shelter, money, social involvement, and the opportunity to achieve (Harrison, 1978).

- Needs: biological and psychological requirements, values acquired through learning and socialization, motives to achieve desired ends (French & R. Kahn, 1962; Harrison, 1985).

### **1.10 Assumptions**

This study's assumptive roots in CRT (critical race theory), which posits that race mediates every aspect of our lives in the U.S. (Delgado, & Stefancic, 2012), are crucial to the understanding of the interactions between U.S. born African people and the criminal justice system. Within the literature there are various theoretical orientations used to analyze the criminal justice apparatus. While these orientations are for the most part not mutually exclusive, this study makes use of a system of oppression orientation. This position combines the basic view of criminal justice as an open system, influenced by sociopolitical and economic factors with a criminal justice as oppression orientation, which views the behavior of the state through a critical lens (Kraska, Brent, p. 233, 2011).

### **1.11 Scope, Limitations, Delimitations**

The scope of this study is confined by the limits and resources available within my graduate program. These include time and funding limits. Critical case sampling was utilized to seek out and select a formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man in the Atlanta area who met the selection criteria.

The boundaries set for this study are as follows. Though underage children represent an important aspect of the U. S. born African population affected by structural racism via the criminal justice system, the processes which involve them are more complex than the scope of this study allows for. Formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men in the prime adult age group from 30-50 are chosen because they are most likely to have established families and other social ties that may be affected by their experiences. Because the war on drugs has been a major vehicle

for the mass incarceration of African people, the participant should be a formerly incarcerated African man who committed some drug related offense. Though women currently represent the fastest growing prison population, men were chosen for their historically significant role regarding crime and punishment in the U.S.

## **1.12 Chapter Summary**

All U.S. born African communities suffer from some form of structural racism in general, but its manifestation in criminal justice is particularly visible (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2006). Criminal justice law has been used historically in the United States as a tool for the oppression of U.S. born African people. The critical and contextual nature of this study utilizes the methods of portraiture to surface these closeted structures. Conflating race with crime is nothing new, (Victorian era criminal stereotypes conceived of criminals as not just an entirely different “dangerous class” of people but as a separate “type” of person) (Morris, 1994). However, in recent times, Miller (2011) explains that at least two decades of economic growth and social neglect, allowed the United States’ white majority to “present its inner cities with an expensive gift- a new and improved criminal justice system” (Miller, 2011). The stress/strain generated by the misfit of persons of African descent with social environments characterized by structural racism is compounded by the relatively more overt (yet rhetorically colorblind) practices and processes of the criminal justice system. Keeping the relevant bodies of knowledge in mind, portraiture methodology recognizes the social scientific research process as political. This aspect of the research design is essential if there is to be any hope of broad community based solutions that will ultimately empower the communities most affected, rather than continue to marginalize and misunderstand them. “For so long the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of people of color have been devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within

the social sciences, particularly in the area of ethnography” (Bernal, 2002), but portraiture presents a unique opportunity to balance these inequities by prioritizing more egalitarian relationship between researcher and participant. In the following chapter, you will find a brief discussion of the relevant title searches, articles, books and journals researched, as well some discussion of the historical and current findings regarding structural racism via the criminal justice and the mental health impacts of this structural racism.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The United States currently imprisons more people than anywhere else in the world. For U.S. born African men, particularly those men between the ages of 30-50 (predominantly those men born during the prison boom which began in the late 1970s-1980s) with lower levels of socioeconomic resources and education, incarceration has become a rite of passage, an unfortunately significant step in the life course. Though current analyses of structural racism via the criminal justice system may produce startlingly disproportionate data regarding the incarceration of U.S. born African men, these trends are not entirely new. From its inception, the United States has exhibited patterns of racialized criminalization and race-related stress which disproportionately impact U.S. born African communities. This chapter covers a brief discussion of the relevant title searches, articles, books and journals researched, as well some discussion of the historical and current findings regarding structural racism via the criminal justice and the mental health impacts of racism.

*Keywords: formerly incarcerated African-American men, black men, incarceration, imprisonment, mental health, The New Jim Crow, prisoner reentry, race and mental health, race and stress*

Scholars have long studied the criminal justice system as a site of racialized social control. Any database search for studies of U.S. born African men and incarceration will invariably return studies which highlight the roles of gender and race in criminal justice policy in the U.S. From Dorothy E. Roberts (2004) study of the Social and Moral Cost of Incarceration in African-American Communities to earlier works such as Jerome G. Miller's Search and Destroy: African American Males in the Criminal Justice System, various law, political science, as well as social and behavioral science journals have published articles regarding the intersection of race and criminal justice. Legal scholar, Michelle Alexander's (2011) *The New Jim Crow* remains arguably one of the most popular analyses of structural racism via the criminal justice system.

Similarly race based stress has enjoyed an adequately healthy academic interest. Grier & Cobbs, (1968), "Black Rage, was" the first book to take a comprehensive look at U.S. born African life from the vantage point of psychiatry. It was widely-acclaimed as a classic statement of the desperation, conflicts, and anger of black life in America. Harrell's (2000) *Multidimensional Conceptualization of Racism-Related Stress*, theorized that racism can adversely affect mental health status in at least three ways. Racism in societal institutions can lead to truncated socioeconomic mobility, which creates differential access to desirable resources (person-environment fit theory posits that this can be a critical pathway to stress), and poor living conditions that can adversely affect mental health. Experiences of discrimination can induce physiological and psychological reactions that can lead to adverse changes in mental health status, and the acceptance of negative cultural stereotypes can lead to unfavorable self-evaluations that have deleterious effects on psychological well-being (R. Williams, D., & Williams-Morris, R., 2000). Additionally, several models of mental and physical well-being

relative to racism have been proposed (Jackson, & Inglehart, 1995, Williams, 1997) and published by various psychological journals.

Over the past 20 years, medical researchers have found new ways to quantify the effects of the relentless violence on America's inner cities. The inner city remains an important environment to study because, “cities have more poor people, more people of color, and higher crime rates than suburban and rural areas (Freudenberg, 2001). Researchers surveyed residents who had been exposed to violence in cities such as Detroit and Baltimore and noticed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): nightmares, obsessive thoughts, and a constant sense of danger (Beckett, 2014).

In a series of federally funded studies in Atlanta, researchers interviewed more than 8,000 inner city residents, most of them U.S. born African people. Two thirds of respondents said they had been violently attacked at some point in their lives. Half knew someone who had been murdered. Of the women interviewed, a third had been sexually assaulted. Roughly 30 percent of respondents had had symptoms consistent with PTSD—a rate as high or higher than that of veterans of wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan (Beckett, 2014).

Trauma has been identified as the etiological link to PTSD. Trauma exposure and the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among incarcerated men is beginning to receive more attention, in part because men are vastly overrepresented in prisons and jails and also because these men are drawn disproportionately from socially and economically distressed communities (Wolff, et al, 2014).

## **2.2 The Legacy of racialized criminal justice policy: historical overview and current findings**

The Constitution of the United States of America lays out a very explicit construction of citizenship as white, property holding men. The document was written at a time when the term property referred not just to land, but additionally to women, and slaves, with the distinction between free men and slaves being primarily that free men are white and slaves are U.S. born Africana people (Brewer, Heitzeg, 2008). No legal precedents, including the formal abolition of slavery, have eradicated the essentialist racism which pervades the social order of the U.S. infusing its social structures, institutions, including ideological and philosophical constructs with the assumptions necessary to enforce white domination and U.S. born Africana subordination. Thusly we view racism as a structural factor in the lives of U.S. born Africana people.

U.S. born Africana men face a unique threat in regard to their relationship with criminal justice activity, in fact, “U.S. born Africana men have historically been incarcerated at disproportionate rates to their numbers in the U.S. population” (Cooke, 2005). Soon after emancipation, U.S. born Africana men became an oft criminalized segment of the labor force. “Laws were quickly passed that echoed the restrictions associated with slavery and criminalized a range of activities if the perpetrator was a U.S. born Africana person” (Brewer, Heitzeg, 2008). Early Africana sociologists began to zero in on the unique issues faced by their newly freed brethren. W.E.B. DuBois, (1868-1963) and Monroe Work (1866-1945) sought to analyze what social mechanisms were involved in the early over-representation of U.S born Africana men in the criminal justice system. Utilizing social disorganization theory, they suggested that from the 19th century on, newly freed U.S. born Africana men were forced to make an intense and immediate shift from the powerful social control of slavery to operating in the free market

economy. They were to orient themselves to new ways of living, new moral codes, and new economic stressors that were compounded by their existence as U.S. born Africana men within an intensely (explicitly) racialized social order. DuBois and Work further elucidated that The Great Migration, which saw southern U.S. born Africana people move in large numbers to the north in search of economic opportunities, forced a shift from rural environments to the “disorganization” of urban centers. They argued that, contrary to cultural explanations for the struggles of U.S. born Africana peoples, these migratory patterns and the accompanying experiences mirrored those of well-documented European immigrants occurring at the same time. Finally, these early sociologists asserted that there was a direct correlation between the lack of trust U.S. born Africana people had regarding “white” justice and the racialized criminal justice system which was swift in its criminalization and punishment of U.S. born Africana men. They identified the “convict lease system” (in which predominantly U.S. born Africana men were “leased” or “sold” as labor for local businesses) as a site of “a new slavery and slave trade” (DuBois, 1901/2002). Structural racism via the criminal justice system had taken root as soon as it could be applied to newly emancipated U.S. born Africana men (Carrabine, E., et.al (2009).

From the concepts of the “black brute” to the “bad nigger” the criminalization of U.S. born Africana men has been a time-honored tradition in the United States, but with the advent of the civil rights and black power movements came a shift in the rhetoric surrounding these traditions, as well as a shift in the way scholars began to analyze them. As the overtly racial tone of social control (post-slavery and Jim Crow) began to wane under pressure from civil rights struggles and other post-World War II social changes, a law and order rhetoric was being forged to replace it. Jerome G. Miller’s (1996) comprehensive study of the impacts of incarceration on the U.S. born Africana family focused on these disturbing trends, specifically highlighting that

the United States criminal justice system seems to literally target U.S. born African males. Using statistical data from sociological and criminological studies as well as official crime statistics from local, state, and federal departments, and historical accounts, the study sought to uncover how these phenomena came to be. Miller built on the earlier knowledge which confirmed what DuBois and Work, as well as E. Franklin Frazier (1947), Earl R. Moses (1949) and others had previously theorized; race and socioeconomic disadvantage conflated with a lack of social organization in resource poor environments was driving a disproportionate number of U.S. born African men into the criminal justice system. Miller refuted the widely held assumptions regarding the ideological conflation of U.S. born African people, their communities, and crime. He illustrated how what he refers to as a “small band of neoconservative “crime experts” crafted a public campaign resulting in the near hegemonic notion that this society can cure itself by projecting its ills onto U.S. born African people and locking them out of the national gaze, using legal and widely supported methods (Miller, 1996). In the 1990s the Sentencing Project’s Marc Mauer coined the phrase the “race to incarcerate” in describing the expansion of incarceration in the U.S. His contention; that the United States’ systems of incarceration had “mushroomed to the point that they perpetuate a societal commitment to imprisonment through the expansion of vested economic interests. Despite the contentions of rational-legal orientations to crime and criminal justice, the rapid expansion of the criminal justice system over the past 30-40 years has not simply been a necessity to guard society against the rising tide of violent crime, which forced reaction theory posits. Though as Michelle Alexander notes, “unfortunately, at the same time that civil rights were being identified as a threat to law and order (some conservatives even went as far as to identify Martin Luther King Jr.’s application of civil disobedience as a leading cause of crime) the FBI actually reported

dramatic increases in crime (Alexander, 2011 p 41), the “tough on crime” ideology which led to the massive increases in punitive measures has failed to reduce criminal recidivism and instead has led to a rapidly growing correctional system that has strained government budgets (Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. 2010).

From the 1960s to the 1970s, reported street crime quadrupled while homicide rates nearly doubled, and though there was considerable controversy surrounding the FBI’s crime tracking methodologies, there was also a noted rise in the “baby boomer” generation. These 15-24-year-old men (an age group which has been historically linked to crime) were in a prime age group while unemployment rates for U.S. born African men were rising sharply (Alexander, 2011). Consequently, these sociopolitical and economic trends were used uncritically by both politicians and media outlets as evidence of a general tone of lawlessness, and loss of morals within U.S. born African communities, a tone which was presumably emerging as a threat to the established social order of the United States (Alexander, 2010). Though traditional rational-legal orientations to crime and the criminal justice system stress that criminal action is a rational decision and thus punishment increases the cost of crime, serving as a deterrent (Kraska, Brent, p. 34, 2011), these arguments all but ignore the extralegal and environmental concerns related to crime, such as socioeconomic deprivation and political disenfranchisement.

One of Richard Nixon’s key advisors, H.R. Halderman recalled, “President Nixon emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this, while not appearing to.” (Alexander, 2011). Effective criminalization of U.S. born African men would lead to wide reaching changes in the U.S. criminal justice system that would have devastating impacts on these men and their communities. Worse, the policies intended to protect citizens from violent crimes, turned out to in practice

incarcerate overwhelming numbers of non-violent offenders, many of them U.S. born African Americans casualties of the “war on drugs. The sociopolitical clashes (the Civil Rights movement, Watergate, The Vietnam War) leading up to Ronald Reagan’s presidency marked the era where Nixon first declared a “war on drugs” but it was Ronald Reagan who would master Nixon’s plan to “echo white frustration in race-neutral terms through implicit racial appeals.” Alexander contends that it was Reagan’s “colorblind” rhetoric on welfare, taxes, states’ rights, and particularly crime, that was clearly understood by white and U.S. born African American voters as racialized, yet this had now become as Nixon had hoped, impossible to prove (Alexander, 2011). “The conservative led war on drugs would go on to become the primary vehicle for ushering U.S. born African American men into the annals of the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2011).

Law Professor and criminologist F.E. Zimring (p. 244, 1996) maintains that regarding California’s now notorious tough on crime legislation the “three-strikes law”, “The California version of three-strikes law mandated that “the type of criminal record necessary to create eligibility for the twenty-five-years-to-life sentence did not require violence. A conviction for residential burglary would be a sufficient condition for Three Strikes.” He explains that, “Because burglary is much more common than serious crimes of violence, many of those who become eligible for the extended sentences are burglars (Zimring, p. 245, 1996). Other scholars also commented on the misfires of rational-legal orientations toward crime and criminal justice as embodied by the “tough on crime” rhetoric. Miller (2011), refers to this ideological tendency as the root of the moral panic which lead to the racialized carceral state. “Derived not from popular opinion but from the coalescing of politicians, media conglomerates, and law enforcement officials, tough on crime rhetoric created a social and political environment in the U.S. that facilitated the mass imprisonment and racialized social control visited upon U.S. born

Africana people. Miller contends that, “the bulk of [U.S. born Africana] males proved to not be so violent after all, and so the criteria were adjusted to widen the potential pool.” Definitions of violence were expanded. In fact, he notes, that the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI’s) Uniform Crime Report (UCR) was from its very inception a tool used by J. Edgar Hoover to inflate both the incidences and the seriousness of reported crimes while building both a steady and largely unquestioned role for his agency. He notes that while most European nations reported their crime statistics based on convictions, conspicuously, the U.S. via the FBI’s UCR to this day uses arrests and complaints (Miller, 2011).

Though many argued (and many still do) that U.S. born Africana men have come to be a virtually incarcerated group because of their behavior and bad personal choices, which leads to crime and subsequent arrests, estimates of the reduction in violent crime during the 90s attributed to the prison boom range from 5 to 25 percent. Miller assures that “we long ago entered the zone of diminishing returns.” Even neoconservatives like John Dilulio who originally coined the term “super predators” admitted by the end of the decade that, “Two million Prisoners Are Enough” (Dilulio, 1999). In the 1990s, Dilulio used the term “super predators” to describe what he referred to as children who “have absolutely no respect for human life and no sense of the future, adding, “And make no mistake. While the trouble will be greatest in black inner-city neighborhoods, other places are also certain to have burgeoning youth-crime problems that will spill over into upscale central-city districts, inner-ring suburbs, and even the rural heartland (Piehl, Dilulio, 1995).

A rational-legal orientation not only ignores extralegal and environmental influences on crime and criminal punishment, it ignores the networks of “sub governments” (Ripley, Franklin, 1984) that come to exert significant control over what is defined as crime and how its punished.

The patterns of organizational behavior and interaction among those entities who participate in the “corrections-commercial complex,” fit the model of a sub-government, with their triangular power arrangement of government, commerce, and correctional organizations. The American Correctional Association (ACA) sets the standards that government and private contractors follow, establishing alliances that allow private organizations to dictate policy as opposed to public officials who are held accountable to U.S. citizens (Lily, Knepper, 1993). Accreditation by the ACA is even recognized by the courts as representative of a correctional institution’s acceptability which it runs out “provides an excellent defense against civil suits by inmates for violations of Constitutional rights (Clear & Harris, 1987).

The interlace of corporate interests and incarceration attaches an obvious profit motive to the “search and destroy” (Miller, 1996/2011) tactics employed by law enforcement in U.S. born Africana communities. In her sociolinguistic study of prisoner narratives, Patricia O’Connor (2003) explains that the corporations that profit from incarceration include those that both build and run prisons. The inmates in her study referred to themselves as being “warehoused.” She cautioned that, “This warehouse has a definite color line, and this warehousing is deeply affecting the U.S. born Africana family structure (Harris, and Miller, 2003). While many scholars began focusing on the contemporary rise of correctional facilities that would lead to the current state of mass incarceration, Michelle Alexander (2011) borrowed from earlier studies and drew parallels between earlier systems of racialized social control and the contemporary model. Like Miller (1996/2011), Alexander illuminated the racial politics of criminal justice. According to her analysis of the historical shifts in structural racism via the criminal justice system, a “conservative revolution” in response to civil rights activity paved the way for the new and improved system of legalized racial-social control which she contends did not reach its height

until Ronald Reagan claimed Nixon's "colorblind"/ law and order mantle for himself. Alexander maintained that Reagan would also inherit the former president's "war on drugs" which would usher historically unprecedented numbers of U.S. born African men into the criminal justice system, many for non-violent possession violations (Alexander, 2011). The 13th amendment to the U.S. Constitution allowed slavery to continue with the condition that it exist only, "as a punishment for crime," enabling the sustained profit of overwhelmingly white market interests while "defining criminal justice largely as a means for controlling [U.S. born African] labor" (Davis, p. 31, 2003).

These destructive asymmetrical social, political, and economic conditions have been shown to impact not just the imprisoned and formerly imprisoned men, but their families, their communities and the broader society. "Prisons have become enmeshed in the normal way of life in many inner-city communities" (Roberts, D. E. 2004). A criminal record ultimately diminishes the employment prospects of individuals so stigmatized and the experience with incarceration is on the verge of becoming a normal life-course expectation in some U.S. born African communities. U.S. born African disenfranchisement alone can affect which of the major political parties has control of the US Congress and, furthermore, was easily the numerical margin of victory in the 2000 presidential election (Bobo, L. D., & Thompson, V. 2006). Dorothy Roberts (2004) summed up the reverberating impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system thusly, "Empirical research on the social consequences of incarceration in these communities and the resulting disenfranchisement of their citizens makes the moral question of mass imprisonment inescapable." The mounting evidence of mass imprisonment's collateral damage to [U.S. born African] communities shows that the extent of U.S. incarceration is not only morally unjustifiable, but morally repugnant. By damaging social networks, distorting social norms, and

destroying social citizenship, mass incarceration serves a repressive political function that contradicts democratic ideals and is itself immoral” (Roberts, D.E. 2004). The prevalence of incarceration as a means of social control for U.S. born African men has been well established but considerably less literature has examined the mental health impacts of this specific social arrangement.

### **2.3 Racism and Mental Health: Historical Overview and Current Findings**

Unfortunately, formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men often return home to the same ill-fitting environments they left during their imprisonment, environments characterized by socioeconomic, political and educational disadvantage. Correlations have been found which suggest linkages and interactions between neighborhood disadvantage and stress, indicating the validity of person-environment fit theory (Catherine, Mirowsky, 2001). There remains a thread from early theories of social disorganization and stress to contemporary studies regarding the negative mental health impacts of racist social environments, disorganized communities, and mental health challenges. Post-Civil Rights studies of the continuing significance of race, by Thomas and Hughes (1986), found that, in general whites experience better psychological well-being and quality of life than U.S. born African people do.

There are significant negative mental health impacts associated with the effects of race-related stress in general and with incarceration in particular. Early race literature examined the nature of racism, prejudice, and discrimination in general as well as their effects on society (Allport, 1954). Mental health dimensions have also been adequately explored (Kardiner, & Ovesey, 1951). Quantitative studies have suggested that, racism can adversely affect mental health status in at least three ways. First, racism in societal institutions can lead to truncated socioeconomic mobility, differential access to desirable resources (person-environment fit theory

posits that this can be a critical pathway to stress/strain), and poor living conditions that can adversely affect mental health. Second, experiences of discrimination can induce physiological and psychological reactions that can lead to adverse changes in mental health status. Third, in race-conscious societies, the acceptance of negative cultural stereotypes can lead to unfavorable self-evaluations that have deleterious effects on psychological well-being (R. Williams, D., & Williams-Morris, R., 2000).

Harrell's (2000) study of racism-related stress laid a conceptual foundation for how complex the relationships between racism and well-being can be. Though Harrell's study emphasizes the need for multiple perspectives in an effort to avoid the trap of dichotomous logic, she also cautions against the pathologizing or "victim blaming" as well as assuming that racism can be ignored without psychological consequence. Harrell's study illuminated various contexts in which racism may impact mental health, interpersonally, collectively, cultural-symbolically, and socio-politically, as well as highlighting the significance of the transaction between person and environment for understanding how "one's position in the social structure also defines one's access to various resources that can be useful in dealing with stress/strain (Harrell, p. 44, 2000). Additionally, Harrell stresses the important role that mental health professionals play in understanding and actively intervening in racism, rather than remaining silent about it as the training in these disciplines has been historically prone to do (Harrell, p. 53, 2000).

While the selling of illegal substances has been identified as a key component in the mass incarceration of U.S. born African men, substance use has also been shown to play a crucial role in both disproportionate rates of incarceration as well as mental health challenges. "Early substance abuse has a significant effect on risk behaviors later in life and leads to greater involvement with the criminal justice system (Mukku, et al, 2012)." Contrary to conventional

opinion, U.S. born African people have higher abstinence rates than the general population, but due to structural racism via the criminal justice system, experience significant disparities in drug related incarcerations as well as a disproportionate degree of health consequences related to addiction (Mukku, et al, 2012).

Substance use has been linked to the impairment of executive functions and decision making, forethought and impulse control, and subsequently increases in an individual's propensity to participate in criminal acts (Anthony, Forman, 2003). Furthermore, the onset of SUD (substance use disorder) has been shown to make individuals more prone to polysubstance use (Newcomb et al., 2001; Martino et al., 2004), and consequently polysubstance use has been linked to decreased impulse control (Cunningham, 2004), selling drugs, and other crimes (Nurco, 1998). Pressure from peers and family members, violent associates, fewer employment opportunities, lack of safe housing, and the stress of probation conditions, have been shown to affect the lived experiences and mental health of formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men (Mukku, et al., 2012). Iguchi, et. al. (2005) illustrated how the use of incarceration as a key drug control tool has disproportionately affected the mental health and well-being of racial and ethnic minority communities, while Primm, Osher, & Gomez (2005) concluded that among the disproportionately U.S. born African prison population had, "active symptoms of serious mental illness with two-thirds likely to have a co-occurring substance use disorder diagnosis."

Though there has been research, evaluation, and epidemiological data concerning race, mental health, substance abuse and the criminal justice system, the literature still lacks nuance and context in regard to qualitative examinations of how those most impacted perceive the myriad ways in which structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system, may impact and influence their mental health and well-being. This study's methodological approach

and ecological framework represent qualitative research regarding the experiences of a formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man, that may offer insights beyond the scope of purely quantitative designs.

## **2.4 Conclusions**

Ultimately, structural racism via the criminal justice system is but one pathway in which racial oppression, and inequality course into the lives of U.S. born African and other marginalized peoples, however in terms of its historicity (Work, DuBois, 1901; Frazier, 1947; Moses, 1949; Grier & Cobbs, 1968) and its readily traceable effects on U.S. born African men, their families, and communities (Cooke, 2005; Hostetter & Jinnah, 1993), it is a crucial pathway in that it is arguably the most visible one in contemporary U.S. society.

While structural racism's mental health impacts remain open to further explanation, nuance, and contextualization, this study builds upon the knowledge of previous studies like Harrell (2000) that have made clear the importance of the ecological context (inclusive of socioenvironmental, as well as societal and community variables) that may contribute to the nature of racist experiences which can be either overt or covert (Harrell, p. 49, 2000). Moreover, she asserts that, "while life-stressors occur across all sociodemographic groups (referring to instances like the loss of a job or the death of a loved one), for people of color, life stress must include consideration of experiences that are related to the unique person-environment transactions involving race (Harrell, p. 49, 2000). In line with this study's goals, Harrell suggests that the subjective judgment of the individual is the critical point of analysis in understanding the impact of racism on mental health and well-being (Harrell, p. 44, 2000). Historical and contemporary evidence compels us to ask if slavery was truly abolished, or whether it might be more accurate to say that it has been redesigned?

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

The literature regarding structural racism via the criminal justice system as well as the body of knowledge concerned with the mental health impacts of structural racism in general suggest that U.S. born African men with low levels of education and socioeconomic status are uniquely susceptible to negative mental health outcomes that can have reverberating effects on their own well-being as well as the mental health and well-being of their families, their children, and their broader communities. A history of incarceration can limit one's ability to secure long-term housing and/or meaningful and living-wage employment. U.S. born African men who have done time in prison indicate that difficulty in finding and maintaining employment impedes their ability to secure housing and contributes to family dysfunction and separation from their wives, partners, and children (Cooke, 2005).

In addition to the disproportionate negative impact that the criminal justice system has on U.S. born African men as a racial group, historical and institutionalized racism add multiple layers of struggle in the lives of these men regarding the misfit between them and their environment and the subsequent production of various forms of stress/strain, including psychological, physiological, and behavioral challenges. The societal conditions which gave rise to the collective desperation, conflicts, and anger of U.S. born African life in America famously studied by Grier & Cobbs in 1968 are still present and operative within the lives of many U.S. born African people. Structural racism remains within societal institutions, still posing a threat to the socioeconomic mobility of many U.S. born African people. The wealth of white households was 13 times the median wealth of U.S. born African households in 2013, compared with eight times the wealth in 2010, and racial discrimination in homeownership markets continues to keep a disproportionate number of U.S. born African people trapped in substandard

living environments (Kochhar & Fry, 2014). The differential access to desirable resources, combined with poor living conditions can adversely affect mental health and, experiences of discrimination have been shown to induce physiological and psychological reactions that can lead to adverse changes in mental health status. Additionally, the acceptance of negative cultural stereotypes, which are constantly being broadcast through various media outlets, can lead to unfavorable self-evaluations that have deleterious effects on psychological well-being (R. Williams, D., & Williams-Morris, R., 2000). Structural racism via the criminal justice system damages social networks, distorts social norms, and destroys social citizenship. In sum, structural racism via the criminal justice system facilitates reverberating challenges to the mental health and well-being of U.S. born African men, their families, and their communities while “serving a repressive political function that contradicts democratic ideals and is itself immoral” (Roberts, D.E. 2004). In the next chapter, we will discuss the methodological aims of this study, including an elaboration of the rationale discussed in Chapter 1, along with sampling, data collection, and analytical concerns.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This study represents the integration of person-environment fit theory with a critical race orientation. It assumes based on the available evidence, that the concept of race permeates every aspect of life in the U.S. “In many ways “human fate still rides upon ancestry and appearance. The characteristics of our hair, complexion, and facial features still influence whether we are figuratively free or enslaved. Race dominates our personal lives. It manifests itself in our speech, dance, neighbors, and friends—our very ways of talking, walking, eating and dreaming are ineluctably shaped by notions of race. It determines our economic prospects. The race-conscious

market screens and selects us for manual jobs and professional careers, red-lines financing for real estate, green-lines our access to insurance and even raises the price of that car we need to buy. Race permeates our politics. It alters electoral boundaries, shapes the disbursement of local, state and federal funds, fuels the creation and collapse of political alliances, and twists the conduct of law enforcement” (Kelly, 1965; Shinn & Toohy 2003).

This study examines the case of a formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man and the complexities of the stress/strain in his life and relationships as they are impacted by the structural racism within the criminal justice system and in the broader context of a society characterized by racialized and structural inequality. Utilizing the methodology of portraiture and person-environment fit theory, this study frames mental health in a social, political and cultural context. The study explores the pathways whereby racialized and asymmetrical treatment of U.S. born African men in criminal justice processing may be negatively impacting their mental health as well as the mental health of their families and communities. Further, being that the critical pathway to optimal mental health is identified in the literature as the subjective fit between person and environment, this instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) seeks to add to the relevant bodies of knowledge a more nuanced and contextual examination of the negative mental health impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system. This chapter contains discussions of the methodological aims of this study, including an elaboration of the rationale discussed in Chapter 1, along with sampling, data collection, and analytical concerns

### **3.2 Research Method and Design Appropriateness**

Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997) is an approach to qualitative inquiry that looks to engage in rigorous social scientific research while simultaneously moving “beyond positivistic interventions” to fully engage both researcher and participants in the process of crafting valid,

compelling representations of the participants' lives and experiences. It is these (re)presentations which illustrate life's complexities while providing a critical examination of the portrayed events. The researcher's (portraitist) rendering represents a shared space where both researcher and respondent exist physically, spiritually, and emotionally; dismantling the notion that the researcher is the only knower and expert on the lives and experiences of the respondents (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005). Portraiture, as a methodology for qualitative research, was inspired by Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot's experiences as the subject of an artist's rendering. From these experiences, Lawrence-Lightfoot drew important "methodological lessons," regarding the ways in which portraits express the perspective of the artist and are shaped by the evolving relationship between the artist and the subject, as well as the ways in which portraits capture one's "essence" or qualities of character and history, as opposed to literal images (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Lawrence-Lightfoot took note of the ways in which the artist was required to be "both generous and tough, skeptical and receptive." She noted that she was "never treated or seen as an object but always as a person of strength and vulnerability, beauty and imperfection, mystery and openness," and from these methodological lessons, Lawrence-Lightfoot would begin constructing the qualitative methodology of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005).

The methodology was first operationalized from 1980 to 1983, when Lawrence-Lightfoot visited six high schools across the country—urban, suburban, and elite preparatory schools—with the goal of capturing their institutional character and culture and documenting the mix of ingredients that made them good schools (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Searching for a form of inquiry that might capture the complexity and aesthetic of human experience, Lawrence-Lightfoot made use of her early experiences as an artist's subject by developing a document that came as close as possible to painting with words. Drawing inspiration from a "long arc of work,

reaching back two centuries, that joined art and science, “the aim of portraiture is to “create a narrative that bridges the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature. In Lawrence-Lightfoot’s words the objective of a portraiture is to construct a, “written piece which conveys the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the “subjects” while allowing respondents to experience the portraits as both familiar and exotic so that in reading them, they are introduced to a perspective that they had not considered before. Portraiture is suitable to this case study in that it facilitates a humanizing visibility for formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men and their families whose humanity and dignity is often drowned under accounts which criminalize and stigmatize them. Portraiture allows respondents to feel “seen”—fully attended to, recognized, appreciated, respected, and yet scrutinized (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005).

Adhering to post-positivist notions of validity (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005), portraiture is especially appropriate for a study such as this; where it is an explicit goal to examine the complexities of lives and relationships impacted by structural racism broadly, as well as the structural racism of the criminal justice system, not just from the perspectives of the literature and the researcher, but from the perspectives of the participants. Because it positions participants as more than mere objects of study, portraiture is essential to the purpose of this study. Through the development of the portrait, participants engaged with questions designed to facilitate an increased familiarity with perspectives on structural racism and injustice. The use of portraiture in this study created a space where participants had the opportunity to become aware (or have their awareness expanded) of social structures and processes they may not have considered before. Portraiture specifically allows the researcher to “conduct lived research that seeks to forefront the perspectives, voices, and experiences of the researcher and the participant while

engaging in solution oriented “praxis” (McLaren, 1997) (Denzin, 2003), to form empowering partnerships between the researcher and the participant (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005).

Portraiture recognizes the social scientific research process as political, and as such, it provides a starting point for collaborative, solution-oriented work between researchers and respondents.

Portraiture represents an opportunity to answer the question of how U.S. born African men and their families perceive the mental health impacts of their experiences with structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system.

This study, while examining the complexities of lives and relationships impacted by the criminal justice system within the broader context of a society characterized by its racialized and structured inequality, adds to the relevant bodies of knowledge some contextual examinations of the negative mental health impacts of structural racism broadly, and specifically, via the criminal justice system. This study’s assumptive roots can be found in CRT (critical race theory), which posits that race mediates every aspect of our lives in the U.S. (Delgado, & Stefancic, 2012).

Additionally, “In portraiture, a researcher investigates and presents the multiple contexts and interactions that surround participants. Critical Race Theory considers the political events, personal histories, societal norms, as well as laws and policies that affect the primary setting. Using portraiture and CRT, the researcher connected participants’ experiential knowledge as racialized subjects to “the multiple ways in which people of color understand and navigate their families, communities, schools, and professional lives” (Dixson, 2005; Harding, 2005).

This study employs portraiture’s layered methodological approach, as opposed to the positivist orientations of quantitative methodologies, or the less complex qualitative methodologies, in order to forefront the perspectives, voices, and experiences of both researcher and respondent and accomplish the research goal of producing a portrait which supports

scientifically oriented social action and social change starting within the communities of those most affected. Ideally, the findings can assist in spreading awareness and stimulating action and social change initiatives throughout the country via coalitions comprised of various interrelated community organizations, social service organizations, and community mental health entities. Qualitative methods such as narrative-biography are appropriate for engaging and analyzing stories and subjective experiences, but portraiture magnifies these strengths with its multilayered approach to providing a holistic and multifaceted portrait of the respondent and the lived experiences of those affected by his incarceration.

A problem-solving approach is relevant here because it is not enough to simply describe the previously unexplored nuances of these issues. There must also be some discussion of and action towards these problems. This study should be used to inform a community-oriented praxis, one that can perceive these issues through the lens of social science as well as through the eyes of those who are most affected. A problem-solving approach extends the research questions beyond the realm of scientific inquiry and into the world of activism, and social change. If we can begin to better understand the unique complexities of the mental health impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system on U.S. born African men and their families, and how these impacts are perceived, then we can make full use of a strengths-based perspective toward social change, setting the stage for collaborative work between social service organizations, community organizations, and community members affected by the problem.

If problem solving begins with the way in which we define the problem, this study helps to define the problem of the mental health impacts of structural racism in general, as well as its manifestations via the criminal justice system, in collaborative terms, acknowledging the voices and lived experiences of the population most affected. This study is rooted in a community

psychological understanding regarding problems of this scope, namely that rather than taking linear, positivist approaches to problem-solving, the more desirable trajectory is to transform worlds, allowing respondents and researcher to be reflective and collaborative in their exchanges.

There is a growing body of literature exploring the lives of men who were incarcerated and their families. However, Cooke (2005) recommends that, “research directions that may offer new information about these families include exploring mental health issues of men who were formerly incarcerated, particularly those from those groups that are disproportionately represented in the prison system (e.g., U.S. born African peoples, Latinos, Native Americans) (Cooke, 2005). The literature regarding structural racism via the criminal justice system as well as the body of knowledge focused on race-related stress both reveal a lack of contextualized and subjective data regarding the lived experiences of those most affected by racism in its myriad forms. While quantitative methods have given us a wealth of statistical data regarding the impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system, qualitative methods tend to be able to probe more subjective areas of inquiry in ways that quantitative methods become much less appropriate. For so long the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of people of color have been devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within the social sciences, particularly in the area of ethnography (Bernal, 2002), but as a form of qualitative inquiry, portraiture presents a unique opportunity to balance these inequities by prioritizing more egalitarian relationship between researcher and participant. Distinct from traditional narrative-biographical research, portraiture represents a blending of qualitative methodologies, as the researcher in the field employs life history, limited naturalistic inquiry, collecting relevant documents, archival records, and possibly physical artifacts, while drawing on the visual aesthetic metaphor of the portrait (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005).

### **3.3 Population**

The theoretical sample consists of one formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man age 30-50. Because the war on drugs has been identified as the primary vehicle of structural racism via the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2011), the theoretical sample includes an emphasis on those formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men who have committed drug related crimes, as well as the men in this population who have adult children. A theoretical sample inclusive of formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men with adult children attempts to represent the reverberating effects of stress/strain on the families and communities of respondents while operating within the time and resource constraints of the graduate program. Formerly incarcerated black men in the prime adult age group from 30-50 are chosen because they are most likely to have established families and other social ties that may be affected by their experiences. Though women currently represent the fastest growing prison population, men were chosen for their historically significant role regarding crime and punishment in the U.S. as well as the fact that U.S. born African men have been found to be at increased risk from the stressful effects of racism (Elligan & Utsey, 1999; McCord & Freeman, 1990; Utsey, 1997).

### **3.4 Sampling**

Foremost, convenience sampling was utilized to obtain a critical case sample. In pursuit of analytic generalization, one formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man who had been incarcerated for 7 years, and whose record contains drug related offenses, was chosen from the thesis committee's professional databases. The sampling frame consisted of adult men, between ages 30-50, of African descent born in the U.S. who had been incarcerated for at least 3 years and had been home for at least 1 year. Emphasis was placed on formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men who had committed drug related crimes. The methodology of portraiture requires

researchers to conduct ecologically sound studies, which include ethnographic observations, drawing upon not only the individual participant but the communities and cultural settings in which the participant lives, to construct a portrait (Cope, Jones, Hendricks, 2015). As a part of the consent form, permission was granted by the primary participant, to speak with any adult family members, community members, and close friends of the primary participant in order to deepen the portrait, provide some internal validity checks on the data provided by the primary participant, and obtain data which spoke to the reverberating effects of structural racism broadly, and via the criminal justice system in particular. The auxiliary participants gave their consent to be interviewed as well.

The sampling frame was intended to be logically representative of U.S. born African men and the adult black kinship networks impacted by structural racism in general, and structural racism via the criminal justice system in particular. These are people who can purposefully and meaningfully inform an understanding of the mental health impacts of structural racism, because the problem is an aspect of their lived experiences. One formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man age 47, was selected as a case study. Selection criteria dictates that all respondents must be able to read at no lower than a 8th grade level. The study takes into the account the IRB's definition of formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men as a vulnerable population. Consent forms will be issued prior to any data collection. No respondent is required to participate and no respondent will be coerced in any way. In this study, respondents will not have any more risks than they would in a normal day of life, however, in the event that any psychological distress is caused by the recalling of any negative experiences, the PI retains referrals for professional mental health services to assist participants with any challenges they may face in the context of the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If a respondent decides to be in the study and change their mind, they have the right to withdraw at any time. The respondent may skip questions or stop participating at any time without any loss or penalty. They will be informed of these conditions prior to any data collection via hard copy consent form. The respondent's confidentiality will be protected. His story and lived experiences are the focus, actual identities are not required data. Pseudonyms will replace all names to further protect the participant's identity.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures and Rationale**

The methodology of portraiture represents a blending of the qualitative techniques associated with life history while drawing inspiration from ethnographic approaches. "The 'portraitist' listens for the authentic central story as perceived by participants, choosing to explore and relate their narratives from a framework of strength rather than deficiency" (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1983). Attending to the ecological nature of the research questions, included a mapping of the participant's social life. In accordance with this, some input from the participant's family and friends was incorporated into the final portrait.

In this study, the methodology of portraiture was applied to a single case study format. The participant was drawn from the thesis committee's professional networks using convenience sampling. The eligible participant was presented with a consent form. Consent was obtained, and the PI, and the participant scheduled the times of data collection. Times, and dates were scheduled in conjunction with the participant to ensure the most convenient and comfortable experiences for him.

The design of this study features three separate (before prison, during prison, after prison respectively) one-hour life history interviews containing open-ended and pre-prepared questions

for the formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man, gleaned his life history while focusing on his experiences and perceptions of, as well as his interactions with the criminal justice system. The technique of life history forms the basis of the respondent's "portrait" as the overall picture of their life. This technique aims to obtain a snapshot of longitudinal data regarding the ways in which structural racism via the criminal justice system may intervene in the lives of U.S. born African men. Following the initial life history interviews, the PI asked the participant's permission to speak with other family members regarding his life. In accordance with portraiture's emphasis on constructing a coherent narrative (portrait) using multilayered perspectives, these interviews with the participant's adult family members were used to map the principal participant's social life. These interviews also served, in part, as an internal validity check on the data provided by the formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man. These interviews were shorter and utilized modified versions of the initial interview questions. These modified questions were designed to obtain the family members' experiences and perceptions of some of the major life events detailed by their formerly incarcerated male family member. They focused primarily on the impact of incarceration on relationships.

During the periods of fieldwork, the PI viewed some relevant documents that helped deepen the analysis. Field notes took the form of a research diary designed to aid in the promotion of reflexivity in the research process. The data from all observational periods was compiled to construct the final portraiture.

An exit meeting was scheduled with the participant, in which he was able to reflect on his experiences in the study and compensation was provided in the form of ten-dollar gift cards for the participant and his family, as well as care packages which included new apparel donated by Atlanta area fashion brands. The exit meeting and compensation served to bring the research

process full-circle which is consistent with the African-centered philosophical concept of Ubuntu, a concept of humanism or recognition of our shared interdependence and the process of creative intersubjective formation in which the “other” becomes a mirror for one’s humanity, embodying the concept that, “I am because, we are” (Eze, M. O. 2006). In comparison to other techniques that could be used, the aforementioned techniques provide a more collaborative, nuanced, and textured “portrait” of the lives and experiences of respondents.

While the study aimed to produce a portrait, which weaves together and forefronts the perspectives, voices, and experiences of both researcher and respondent, there were limitations involved. The scope of this study was confined by the limits and resources available within the graduate program. These included, but were not limited to, time and funding limits.

### **3.6 Instrument Selection Appropriateness**

Due to the misfit between the formerly incarcerated man, his needs and the available resources in his environment, which become impaired if not further impaired by his interactions with the criminal justice system, his mental health may be negatively impacted. The primary constructs were drawn directly from the person-environment fit theory literature, and include; Stress/Strain, Needs, and Resources. These constructs are measured as follows; Stress/Strain is conceptualized as having psychological (dissatisfaction, anxiety, dysphoria, complaints of insomnia, restlessness, anger, paranoia, helplessness/hopelessness, frustration, resentment), physiological (compromised immune system functioning) and behavioral dimensions (smoking, overeating, absenteeism, frequent utilization of health care services). Needs consist of both biological and psychological requirements, values acquired through learning and socialization, as well as motives to achieve desired ends (French & R. Kahn, 1962; Harrison, 1985). Resources

are defined as extrinsic and intrinsic supplies and rewards that may fulfill the person's needs i.e. food, shelter, money, social involvement, and the opportunity to achieve (Harrison, 1978).

These content dimensions were explored through interview questions which focused on the participant's emotional and psychological states during their interactions with the criminal justice system as well as within environments where there were insufficient resources to meet their needs. Interview questions explored the primary participant's life before, during, and after incarceration.

Additionally, to further examine these mental health content dimensions, the PI administered the OQ - 45.2 which was evaluated by the committee chair Dr. Makungu Akinyela. The OQ - 45.2 is a 45 item self-report instrument requiring a subject to rate their functioning on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument is designed to assess common symptoms across a range of adult mental disorders and syndromes, including stress related illness. The instrument particularly identifies stress in three areas; Symptom Distress; Interpersonal Relations; and Social Role distress. Scoring is as follows:

Symptom Distress (SD) Score

Range 0-100

Clinical cut-off score: 36 or more - indicates symptoms of clinical significance.

Interpersonal Relations (IR) Score

Range: 0-44

Clinical cut-off score: 15 or more - indicates symptoms of clinical significance.

Social Role (IR) Score

Range: 0-36

Clinical cut-off score: 12 or more - indicates symptoms of clinical significance.

Total Score

Range: 0-180

Clinical cut-off score: 63 or more - indicates symptoms of clinical significance.

### **3.7 Reliability**

Because qualitative research is in active pursuit of understanding and detailed meaning, extensive time was spent with the primary participant. In a qualitative study, reliability is addressed more accurately as the “trustworthiness,” “credibility,” and “authenticity” of the study. As such, extensive time in the field and the triangulation of multiple data sources served these ends regarding reliability (Creswell, 2013). Interrater reliability was also utilized in the coding analysis.

Data coding was based on patterns and reoccurring themes within the participants’ narrative and experiences. Value coding was used to reflect the participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his perspectives or worldview” (Saldana, 2009 p. 110). Motif coding was used to examine the interpersonal and intrapersonal participant experiences, employing literary themes to bolster the narrative approach to qualitative data collection.

### **3.8 Validity**

The methodologies of portraiture adhere to post-positivist notions of validity (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005). In comparison to other techniques that could be used, portraiture provides a more collaborative, nuanced, and textured examination of the lives and experiences of the participant. The data triangulation of portraiture allows for the mixed qualitative methods to complement one another adding to a more comprehensive set of findings.

### **3.81 Internal**

The study utilized participant validation, which included inviting the participant to comment on the interview transcripts and decide whether the final themes and concepts created adequately reflect the phenomena being investigated.

### **3.82 External**

The scope of this study was confined by the limits and resources available within my graduate program. These include, but were not limited to, time and funding limits. However, the thesis committee's (comprised of U.S. born African professionals in the fields of mental health and social work) professional databases yielded a participant who fit the selection criteria. The critical case sample drawn from their database is logically representative of the population of formerly incarcerated U.S. born African adults in Atlanta, Ga.

## **3.9 Data Analysis**

In addition to rigorous data collection, the PI utilized multilevel data analyses, moving from narrow themes, to broader interrelated themes, and finally to more abstract dimensions (Creswell, 2013). A map of the participant's social life (Appendix C), representing the reverberating effects of mental health impacts within the participant's kinship network, serves as an analytical tool for examining the ways in which the participant's experiences within a society characterized by structural racism, and within the criminal justice system, may have impacted his mental health in relationship to himself, his family and his community. Special attention was

paid to the “shadow side” or unusual angles of data analysis, those aspects of the data that would normally go unnoticed when viewed through more traditional lenses. The goal being to accurately reflect the complexities of real life, while being inclusive of unexpected concepts and findings (Creswell, 2013).

After lengthy considerations value coding and motif coding appeared to be most appropriate for the research questions and theoretical framework. According to Saldana (2009), value coding allows for the “application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldana, 2009 p. 110). This qualitative analytical approach aided the researcher in understanding how the negative impacts of structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice, are perceived within the lived experiences of the participants. Furthermore, Motif coding is most effective for examinations of interpersonal and intrapersonal participant experiences. This coding approach is best suited to “story based data extracted from interview transcripts” (Saldana, 2009 p. 106). It often employs literary themes to bolster narrative approaches to qualitative data collection.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This study views structural racism via the criminal justice system as mediating the relationship between formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men (person) and a society characterized by its racialized and structural inequality. This study’s methodological aims are informed by community psychology’s ecological analogy, which holds that individual mental health and well-being cannot be accurately assessed outside of its interdependence on the mental health of the entire community (Kelly, 1965; Shinn & Toohey 2003). Portraiture represents a shared space where both researcher and respondent exist physically, spiritually, and emotionally; dismantling the notion that the researcher is the only knower and expert on the lives and

experiences of the respondents (Dixson, Chapman, Hill, 2005). Utilizing the critical case sample, the researcher is confident in the study's validity, reliability, and generalizability due to the sheer volume of the aggregate evidence regarding structural racism via the criminal justice system and the broader negative impact that structural racism can have on the mental health and well-being of U.S. born African people. The goal of the research project is to stimulate both social change and social action including intellectual activity, particularly at the community level, regarding the mental health impacts of structural racism as a whole, and structural racism via the criminal justice system, through the methodology of portraiture. The experiences of the U.S. born African man, were contrasted with familial and community input. These measures were designed to gain analytical perspective as well as an internal validity check on the data provided by the formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man. It is the intention of the researcher that the methodological variety of portraiture would afford a rich analytical foundation comprised of not only rigorous interviews but an examination of the structure and organization of U.S. society and the prison setting in contrast to the 'natural,' or taken for granted settings of the participants' lives.

In the next chapter the findings of the study are presented via the portrait of a formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man. This multivocal portrait represents the analyses of the data collected. The next chapter covers the major themes, categories, and patterns in the manner consistent with the portraiture methodology. The findings are reviewed in relation to the synthesis of first (values) and second (motif) cycle coding.

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, you will find the portrait of a formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man. This multivocal portrait represents the analyses of the data collected. This chapter covers the major themes, categories, and patterns in the data, in the manner consistent with the portraiture methodology. The findings are reviewed in relation to the synthesis of first (values) and second (motif) cycle coding.

The purpose of this case study was to assist in filling the gaps in understandings of how formerly incarcerated U.S. born African men and their kin perceive their interactions with structural racism via the criminal justice system, in addition to utilizing an ecological framework to examine the mental health dimensions of the complexities of lives and relationships impacted by structural racism via the criminal justice system. Interviews were conducted with 6 participants, one formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man who was convicted of drug related crimes, and five auxiliary participants drawn from the formerly incarcerated man's social network. The 5 auxiliary participants included the formerly incarcerated man's mother, his brother, his sister, a close friend and former inmate, and his nephew. The formerly incarcerated man did not have adult children. These interviews were conducted to examine some of the mental health challenges associated with the impact of structural racism (particularly via the criminal justice system), and to determine common themes within the lived experiences of those disproportionately impacted by it. Interview questions were based on the relevant constructs of person-environment fit theory, with a focus on the "match between needs of the person and the supplies in the environment that pertain to the person's needs," as well as the subjective P-E fit,

which has been identified as the “critical pathway to mental health and other dimensions of well-being” (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998).

## **4.2 Data Collection**

The research questions (What are the mental health impacts of structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system on U.S. born African men and their families? How do U.S. born African men and their families perceive the mental health impacts of their experiences with structural racism, particularly via the criminal justice system?) were addressed by gathering relevant data via 10 interviews. Three life history interviews which detailed Lazarus’ life before, during, and after incarceration were conducted along with an introductory and exit interview. Additionally, 5 auxiliary interviews with members of his kinship (social-familial) network were conducted. The auxiliary interviews were conducted with Lazarus’ mother, sister, brother, friend, and nephew. To further examine Lazarus’ mental health, the PI administered the OQ - 45.2, evaluated by the committee chair Dr. Makungu Akinyela. The OQ - 45.2 is a 45 item self-report instrument requiring a subject to rate their functioning on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument is designed to assess common symptoms across a range of adult mental disorders and syndromes, including stress related illness. The instrument particularly identifies stress in three areas; Symptom Distress; Interpersonal Relations; and Social Role distress.

While conducting the research, the PI took field notes in the form of a research diary designed to aid in the promotion of reflexivity in the research process.

## **4.3 Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed to develop emergent themes. Multilevel data analyses were utilized, moving from narrow themes (first-cycle values coding), to broader interrelated themes

(second-cycle motif coding), and finally to more abstract dimensions (Creswell, 2013), to develop the broad conception of the portrait, as well as its structure, form, and coherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot, Davis, 1997).

A map of the participant's social life (Appendix C), including the connections and interrelationships within the participant's kinship network, serves as an analytical tool for examining the ways in which the participant's experiences with structural racism broadly, as well as structural racism via criminal justice system, impacted his mental health in relationship to his family and community. The emergent themes are presented in three chronologically consistent parts which represent the formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man's (whom we will refer to as Lazarus), life before, during, and after incarceration.

Out of the interviews, the research diary, and the OQ--45.2 mental health evaluation emerges the following portrait of a formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man and his life within *The Invisible War*.

Lazarus was born in Indianapolis in the 1970s, around the same time that the U.S. prison and jail population began to swell. He maintained that despite his mother's sincerest attempts to provide him with a structured and disciplined upbringing he gravitated more towards his father's world. A world Lazarus saw as comprised of economic exchanges and power relationships between drug addicts or "*fiends*," and drug dealers or "*hustlers*." Lazarus's mother, the daughter of a traveling African Methodist Episcopal minister, had met his father while working her summer job at an Indianapolis record store. Lazarus's mother initially saw his father as, "*a very nice gentleman*." She explained to me that they were not married long, only five years. She divorced him due to his frequent infidelities:

*“His father was unfaithful, and I found out. That was intolerable to me, point blank.”*

His father had been incarcerated before as well. Lazarus was lucid within his environment at an early age. He was aware that he lived his early life in an environment characterized by its lack of economic resources. He summed up his childhood in this way:

*“My childhood was a little bit different. I grew up poor, in a poor area, but I was never poor. I never knew I was poor. My mother, single parent home, my mom, you know, I lived with my mom, but my father was very, very involved in my life the whole time he was alive. My father was a very, very colorful character. I saw him on weekends, you know, whenever he came to get us, me and my brother, he had a dozen doughnuts with him and always used a different car. He was flashy, my father was flashy.”*

My attention was immediately drawn to the dissonance between the objective environment of the predominantly U.S. born Africana area of Indianapolis, a lower SES sector of the city, and the perceived “flashiness” of Lazarus’s father. We will return to this dissonance regarding capitalism, and the poverty which emerges as an aspect of structural racism later in the study. For Lazarus, the psychological impact of growing up in an economically divested (in large part due to structural racism in the form of historical patterns of racialized resource inequalities compounded by “white flight”) area seemed to engender a kind of confusion, a psychological balancing act between living in a low SES objective environment and his subjective experiences of being taken care of by his “flashy” father and other community elders. It should be noted that

poverty statistics typically focus on income as opposed to material hardship. The dissonance here is not unfounded, as distribution of material hardship is actually conceptually distinct from distribution of poverty (Mayer, Jencks, 1989).

The historical and environmental context of structural racism is key here, because, like many low SES U.S. born African families, the cycle of poverty did begin with Lazarus. Recalling a family history characterized by a lack of resources (Lazarus's mother mentioned her poor upbringing as well), Lazarus's sister remembered their father's own characterization of himself:

*“Our father used to call himself, he said he was a street nigga. Our father came home at age thirteen and found his mother laying dead in front of the stove where she was cooking some bacon.”*

She continued:

*“Our father, he raised himself. He had to make the neighborhood think that his mother was sick. She had a massive heart attack. Our father's grown brother, Uncle John paid taxes on the house, but our father had to pay the light, gas, and water. Our father told us that he was a **street nigga**, meaning he had to get out there and hustle.”*

The term “street nigga” is a loaded term. It is a very particular self-appraisal that paradoxically often represents both a sense of rebellious agency and a reminder to many U.S. born African people of the historical legacies of structural racism.

In conjunction with Lazarus having a family history characterized by structured and racialized low SES status, Lazarus’s father was not the only elder in his kinship network forced to resort to unsanctioned economic activity in order to significantly improve income and access to resources.

*“As soon as our father had Lazarus we were real close. He was always at our house. Now see, my mother, you could say, she was, you could call my mother a lady heroin, okay? My mother, she was the biggest, her and her best friend, they was the biggest heroin suppliers in Indianapolis. They delivered the heroin to different neighborhoods. Mama and them would be driving down the street in their Cadillac and they would throw it, they never did hand to hand, they would throw the dope to different spots, you know, large quantities now.” – Lazarus’s Sister*

Lazarus described his father as a “*hustler*” as well. A hustler is defined formally as either a prostitute or an aggressively enterprising person; a go-getter. A hustler is a product of capitalism. Lazarus’s father was the central figure in his early life. His father had a profound influence on the man he would become, shaping his worldview both directly through his words and actions, and indirectly through his actions and the environments in which he placed his son.

*“He was a hustler. My father was a hustler. He was dark skinned, 5'9" and what I always noticed was he always controlled everybody. He was always in control. He had two or three places in different projects, and had the nicest place in the projects, and the social workers would come, and he would charm the social workers and take care of them, but he had a lot of people working for him. He always had me around that. I was real close to my father. My brother was two years younger than me, and my brother, he got to be scared of my father. I was never involved with drugs or anything, never thought about it until I was maybe 12 or 13 years old, and I lived with my father then. I lived there full time because I was sent to live with my father.” – Lazarus*

Lazarus and his younger brother set off on dissonant developmental paths. Even before Lazarus’s encounters with the criminal justice system, he was deriving social, psychological, and behavioral cues from hustlers, while his brother shunned or avoided these cues. The two brothers responses to their environments represent two aspects of a continuum of images for U.S. born Africana males within the racialized structure of U.S. society. Criminality within U.S. born Africana communities remains a hotly debated topic both within these communities and in the dominant discourse, causes, consequences, and cures abound, ranging from U.S. born Africana community members who agree with the dominant society, and those who resist it. In many ways, Lazarus and his brother represent this dichotomy, socially, behaviorally, and psychologically (Austin, 1991).

*“I guess as far as Lazarus is concerned, growing up for the most part, and I’m not saying like everyday, we had good days, but for the most part, it was a bad experience until I was grown and it affected my childhood greatly. I loved my mother so I always wanted to please her. I felt like I had to do what I could... to do the best at what I could do to make sure that I grew up and always had her admiration at heart. And with him, with everything I faced towards him, it was pretty much like I distanced myself, tried my best to distance myself from him and just do what I could do to just become a better person than what I seen in him. Me and Lazarus was so different we almost grew up like enemies.” – Lazarus’s Brother*

What follows is an analytical outline of Lazarus and his family’s narratives. This view of the portrait is arranged according to the three relevant life history periods; life before incarceration, during incarceration, and after incarceration. Additionally, these three life history periods are categorized according to the literary motifs that guided the data analysis process. Lazarus’s story is a story of the interwoven processes of life, death, and rebirth, as well as transformation in an archetypal sense. The findings are presented in keeping with the portraiture methodology as well as the chosen data analysis strategy of motif coding. In this format, Lazarus’s story reveals itself as culturally grounded biography and urban mythology, the archetypal hero’s journey or “monomyth” (Campbell, Blake, 1989). According to portraiture methodology, the three major themes are presented with their relevant dimensions and

qualitative evidence, as well as points of dissonance. A brief conclusion of the findings follows the analysis of the primary themes.

Lazarus's life before incarceration was characterized by environments where predominantly lower SES U.S. born African people lived. White flight, the move of white city-dwellers to the suburbs to escape the influx of minorities, in many cities like Indianapolis in the 1970s produced economically divested urban areas inhabited by largely U.S. born African populations. "About 91,000 people resided in the low-income areas of Indianapolis in 1970s. The low-income areas of Indianapolis were subdivided into three neighborhoods which ranged in population size from 27,000 to 31,000 people. In these areas, U.S. born African people constituted 59 percent of the population, as compared with being 12 percent of the city's population (Fowles, U.S. Census Bureau, 1974). Lazarus's environment was instrumental in shaping his worldview including some of his psychological and cognitive development. "Neighborhoods are commonly believed to influence behavior, attitudes, values, and opportunities. In developmental psychology, neighborhood influences are a part of ecological models (Bronfenbrenner 1989) that view individuals in the context of a series of environments or ecological systems in which they reside-the nuclear family, extended family, peer group, neighborhood, community, and institutions such as the school or the workplace. Since development occurs within contexts, these models are based on the premise that individuals cannot be studied without a consideration of the multiple ecological systems in which they operate" (Brooks-Gunn, et. al, 1993).

As previously mentioned, a major theme in Lazarus's narrative is capitalism, particularly in his early life relating to structural violence, and capitalism in the form of enterprise culture.

Enterprise culture refers to a capitalist society in which taking on financial risks in the hope of profit is encouraged. The hustler is the embodiment of enterprise culture, and we can observe Lazarus's father and step-mother as influential members of his kinship network who modeled this behavior. Enterprise culture is the logical extension of capitalism, it is capitalism's underbelly. Structural violence refers to a process that, "occurs as inequalities are structured into a society so that some have access to social resources that foster individual and community well-being— high quality education and health care, social status, wealth, comfortable and adequate housing, and efficient civic services— while others do not" (Tyner, 2016). In the U.S., this structural violence is racialized within, and as an aspect of capitalism. "To understand who is made most vulnerable where and how socially produced harms are naturalized discursively and materially, it is necessary to theorize specific economic, political, and social relations of oppression and domination and how they articulate (or intersect) in particular historical, and geographic moments." The Invisible War assumes a theoretical orientation toward structural racism.

### **Theme 1: Lived Experiences and Worldview BEFORE incarceration (LIFE)**

#### **Relevant Dimension 1: Enterprise Culture and Ego**

**Major themes here include capitalism as enterprise culture, and ego. Generally, in psychoanalytic theory the ego is conceptualized as the aspect of identity from which our coherent personalities emerge. It is widely accepted that one's formative years (from childhood to adolescence) comprise a crucial period of self-identity formation (Adams, Montemayor, 1983). Early in life, Lazarus seemed to construct an inflated ego identity perhaps as a compensatory edifice, to counteract or guard against various insecurities.**

**Having money, or at least the appearance of having money appeared to be central to this identity. Though Lazarus's motivations for this identity construct require further analyses, what is clear is that his father was a significant influence on his worldview and behavior.**

### **Young King**

*“My father, he was the fence. People threw stuff to him. He was a dope dealer. He was everything, you know. He founded a lot of motorcycle clubs and everything. He had different people doing different things for him and working for him or whatever. But his main thing was he was a big weed man, real big weed man. He would bring me around everything and everybody, because he felt like, you know, like I'm a king or whatever, so **he would expose me to everything so I would know how he moved and everything**” – Lazarus*

*“My father had so many different places. He was taking care of so many different people. He always had different families and different women or whatever, but he took care of them you know. It was just crazy you know. My father was a slender dude, ain't got no muscles in his body or whatever, you know, but he was like fearless. But anyway, it's weird because I developed, it's like I said, I never liked it, but I didn't pay no attention, because people always treated me so differently when I was with my father. They treated me like I was **the boy king**” – Lazarus*

**A hustler, or an aggressively enterprising person, is often thought of as one who employs fraudulent or immoral methods in pursuit of capital. Recall that enterprise culture represents a logical extension of capitalism. Lazarus's aggressive desire for capital is normal regardless of how abnormal his environment may be in respect to the dominant culture. His position within the social structure shaped his methods in early childhood.**

### **Young Hustler**

*“I was like money hungry. I found out that people liked me when I had money like my father, and I would give people stuff and everything. So, I started stealing out of stores and all types stuff when I was real young, and didn't really have to, but I went on to stealing bikes. I'd sell them to one of my father's friends at the pawn shop, and my father didn't know about it. But my father used to say, a wrong ain't a wrong until you get caught. I know that's crazy, but that's what he used to say, you know” – Lazarus*

*“We'd always have the finest shit in the hood, in the worst areas or whatever, you know, and little bitty, either small ass houses, renting stuff out, you know, and knew we could have lived better, but had so many houses, we might be here two weeks, we might be there two weeks. I didn't know it for a while, but then I'm like, all these my father's places. You got 4 or 5 spots around the city, at different projects, and you got different women that's holding down different stuff or whatever, you know. And this was my normal, you know, my normal is totally different than most people's normal. I grew up way too fast.” – Lazarus*

*“My son, I know he’s always been greedy for the dollar” – Lazarus’s  
Mother*

*“No matter what I always had money because I always hustled. I always  
figured out a way to make money” – Lazarus*

**Here, the predatory and exploitative nature of capitalism intertwines with the rebellious Stagolee mythoform, a historically persistent manifestation of U.S. born Africana masculinity which represents challenging authority, toughness, badness, maleness, blackness, achievement by any means necessary. The archetypes of resistance (Nelson, 2005).**

### **Young Boss**

*“My father always told me man, you got to be a master. It was normal. I didn’t think nothing about it, it was just normal. It was what it was. You got puppets and masters in this world. You either a puppet or you a puppet master. He was always telling me, your daddy ain’t never been no puppet. He always told me, I control my time, I don’t punch a clock, if I go punch a clock, it’s because I want to punch a clock, and I don’t have to punch nobody’s clock. I control all of my time. I control everything, you know. He said because I make everything happen. That’s what he always told me. He said son, you a boss. You come from a long line of bosses, I’m a boss, and that’s what he used to say.” – Lazarus*

**Lazarus took his father's words to heart. When he and his family moved to Georgia, Lazarus saw opportunity, he saw prey.**

*“When I moved to Georgia, everything changed. When I was 14, I came to Georgia, and my mom moved here, and I'm like tripping because these folks are so green, and I'm like man, they ain't got no dope, ain't selling no weed, and then at 15, when I was 15, I came back when I was 15; I was coming for a summer, and I knew about freebase and stuff like that and I was like, they didn't know nothing like that. I'm like, aw shoot!” – Lazarus*

*“I was always hustling. I was always trying to find a way to make some money, trying to find a come up, you know.” – Lazarus*

*“We weren't close growing up. My brother was really a busy body type person, always into something. Almost like a con artist or a drifter type personality. He was always concerned about money, or things that he wanted and pretty much by any means necessary he would accomplish that” – Lazarus's Brother*

## **Relevant Dimension 2: Capitalism-Materialism vs. Poverty**

Themes of capitalism and materialism contrasted sharply with themes of impoverished environments. It was within the contrast between capitalism and materialism and impoverished environments where issues of structural racism and class emerged more prominently. It was also within these contrasting spaces where we began to witness some of the more prominent aspects of Lazarus's psychological and behavioral transformations from a child to an urban capitalist. Consequently, during this period Lazarus's unsanctioned entrepreneurship also developed into his major interactions with the criminal justice system.

### **Structural Racism and Class Mobility**

For many scholars, racism is structural and ideological. "It operates on individual, institutional, and cultural levels. In addition, racism has changed its form and application over time and place, and has shifted from legal, overt, and direct acts of violence, discrimination, harassment, and denigration to illegal, subtle, and indirect acts of aversion and hostility. Structural racism is perpetuated through a social system of stratification that limits people of color's access to and opportunity from social, educational, economic, and political participation" (Carter, 2007).

Structural Racism includes ideological constructs which compromise the dignity of U.S. born African people. These ideological constructs, or "ideas about race and race relations, serve to protect the status quo, or Euro-American (white) domination and U.S. born African (black) subordination. The ideological aspect of structural racism can be observed via Lazarus's narrative regarding a childhood game of pretend. For many young males during the time of Lazarus's childhood, Tarzan was a fictional hero, however the character of Tarzan emerges from the ideological aspects of structural racism. "Tarzan

was above all a white ape, someone who possessed all the physical qualities they secretly admired in both apes and black people. To identify with Tarzan was to assume these qualities, without associating themselves with either. Moreover, as a 'wild child' who makes good, who comes out on top without having to conform to the dominant conventions of educated society, he represents a position with which working-class children in particular can identify. Playing at Tarzan on the streets of their inner-city neighbourhoods licensed them to 'behave like savages' whilst maintaining their supremacy as 'Lords of the Urban Jungle' over and against both the black presence and the civilizing mission. In this way, they succeed in 'squaring the circle', turning a code which puts them down into a device for affirming the superior patrimony of being not only white and male, but also working-class 'born and bred" (Cohen, 1987).

The term "African Booty Scratcher," is a racial slur that was used primarily to taunt African immigrants, implying that people from Africa were "uncivilized" or dirty. The slur emerges from the matrix of thought inherent within ideological manifestations of structural racism. It belongs to a class of ideological constructs which support white domination and U.S. born Africana subordination. Within the narrative we see Lazarus's display of emotions. We observe his childhood reaction to more overt forms of racism. Though Lazarus does not comment directly regarding whether he internalized the racial insults or not, recall that one aspect of the psychological harm that can be caused by racism involves the processes of internalization which eat away at one's self-concept.

*"Growing up there was a lot of stuff that seemed racially motivated to me.*

*In Indianapolis, in Speedway, my mom moved to an area called Speedway, we*

*lived there for a couple of years, although it was a bad part of Speedway, it was like where poor whites and blacks lived. That's where I figured out I could fight. I'm going to tell you about a story I definitely remember man, it was Scott Campbell, Scott Campbell was this little mixed kid and it was Scott and Marcus, a white kid, and me and Andre, my little brother. Scott was like always the leader, and we used to play Tarzan all the time. I remember this time, I was like man, why you get to be Tarzan? I want to be Tarzan. Well Tarzan ain't no African booty scratcher, he said. I'll never forget it. We used to all call each other African booty scratcher, you know what I'm saying, you know, and that was a big thing, and I remember, I want to be Tarzan, you know, I was mad! We got into it and Scott pushed me down and I got up and ran home, you know. My father made me go back and fight Scott. I was more afraid of my father than Scott, so I just run up to Scott and I start screaming and hollering, and I start swinging and hitting the dude, and I whooped Scott's ass and everything and Scott would say, but you still a nigger, you still a African booty scratcher. I just kept on beating him until he stopped calling me a African booty scratcher or whatever. I can remember man, that was a turning point in my life. There was a lot of white kids there, and they would be like nigger, nigger, nigger.''- Lazarus*

**Amidst these struggles, Lazarus's brother felt alienated. The family's economic position did not allow the boys' mother to be as available as she would have liked to. The literature on racism and mental health makes it clear that another aspect of negative**

**mental health impact on U.S. born Africana populations involves the curtailing of socioeconomic mobility.**

*“Most of my childhood I felt alone. My mother was always working I guess to keep our status where it was at, and with my brother being the type person he was, I really didn’t feel like I had a brother growing up. We moved a lot, so I’d meet a friend or two and then next thing I knew we’re moving again. So, I just felt like a lot of times it was just me. I didn’t have a lot of relationships with any of my other family besides on the phone, or maybe once or twice, maybe a week or whatever out of the year.” – Lazarus’s Brother*

*“My mom got this job at Delta Airlines. She was making a couple of dollars and we was in the middle class. We jumped up to the middle class then, you know. Then, we moved out of the **hood** hood to the hood, to the top of the hood. My mom bought her first house in Hallville. Hallville, Indianapolis is like the worst side of town you could live in. My mom didn’t really, she didn’t know that because the house was nice.” – Lazarus*

### **Structural Racism, Class, and Capitalism**

**Lazarus’s mother’s attempts to provide herself and her children with the resources and environments commensurate with higher SES met with mixed results. Even with her new job and higher earnings, it remained challenging for her to provide a stable**

**environment. Even with the family’s limited class mobility and subsequent relocations, Lazarus continued to nurture the aspects of his personality that he had formed in early childhood and adolescence. Lazarus became aware of how little resources he actually had growing up when he was able to attend school with whites through a bussing (educational desegregation) program. His father and step-mother’s examples of enterprise culture continued to guide his thought, values, worldview, and behavior.**

*“Let me tell you, I didn’t know I was poor until we was busing, until I went to Ben Davis. That’s when I knew, I said damn. Ben Davis is a junior high school in Indiana, and it was a white high school with buses, right, in 6th or 7th grade, and I was tripping how white folks was living, you know, how white folks had money.” – Lazarus*

*“See, I still had a poor mentality, this hustler mentality where you know, it’s like ah no, I got to get it, you know. I was raised where, like if I see an opportunity to get money, I gave to get it. because I still remember times that I’m over my sister’s house or something like that, lights would get cut off and stuff like that, and I remember going downstairs and having to turn on the lights in the projects, and roaches would scatter and stuff like that, you know” – Lazarus*

*“Going to the white school changed the way I looked at money. I had to step my game up. I’m thinking that I’m doing something, you know, and I really wasn’t.” – Lazarus*

*“Growing up I had gotten all my game, knew everything about everybody. Because they talked about everybody in the projects, and they talked about them, whatever, you know. I’m growing up, you know, and I’m getting in the game. I’m learning everything. I learned everything from drug transactions from you know, from adults fighting, I done seen people get shot, a lot. You have no choice but to grow up quicker than people in another class because it’s like I give you an example. When I went to Ben Davis, it’s like I may be talking about some stuff to the white kid that I’m friends with too or whatever, and we have this conversation about shit, and it’s like really, are you serious? You’re lying. Oh, you did that?” – Lazarus*

*“It’s like I say, you grow up in the hood or whatever, you just have more exposure to stuff, because the education level is kind of lower, a lot lower, and people don’t really understand what they do. It was normal, it was cool. I didn’t think nothing about it. It was just, it was normal. It was just some shit, you know, it becomes normal because you see it, you know, you saw that chick walking down the street naked, cussing and screaming, you know, she do that sometime, right, because she’s crazy, you know, grown woman and everything, and, we say shit, she don’t look that bad, ah I’m going to fuck her. We’d be like I’m going to fuck that crazy mother fucker, you know. It’s the kind of stuff that young people*

*probably in another class, middle class or whatever, wouldn't see because your life is supervised and all that. Then you know money is this thing because too, like I said, when I discovered money, I was like I want more of it, I want more of it.”* –

Lazarus

*“We moved from Indianapolis, to California, to Georgia, moving around most of the time, even in the inner cities, we were moving a lot”* – Lazarus's

Brother

*“It was gangs you know? California, the media makes us think that its Los Angeles that's bad and Oakland, or Compton, stuff like that. But Daddy said, “she's sending Lazarus back, because she said that its bad [the environment] in Hollywood.”* – Lazarus's Sister

**Lazarus's brother maintained that his first experiences of structural racism came not only in the south, but from primarily within the education system.**

*“Well, when we moved to Georgia, I didn't feel racism until we moved to Georgia, and didn't experience racism until we really moved to Georgia, and it's mostly like just you might be walking down the street with some friends and some Caucasians come past you and they start hollering out derogatory comments or slurs or something of that nature. When you're learning in school about your ancestors were slaves and white people were slave owners and you didn't learn*

*anything positive about your ancestors, very rare, besides Martin Luther King and that's about it, maybe one other person. Other than that, you never really learned about positive things, but every subject in history was about what Caucasians did, what they accomplished, and true or positive at that time, we didn't know whether it was true or false, you just take it as being the truth because the teacher is telling you this. You learned a lot about what they did to us and to other people and that causes you to I guess grow hatred towards them. And I feel like they do that to a lot of people, minority people” – Lazarus’s Brother*

### **Capitalism, Crime, and Punishment**

**Lazarus’s embrace of unsanctioned economic activity began to erode not only his relationships with his brother and mother, but within his school and community life. He reflected upon the ways in which his childhood environment had influenced him psychologically, emotionally, and behaviorally. His behavior resulted in his expulsion from high school, which was accompanied by his first substantive contact with the criminal justice system. Many scholars have conducted studies regarding the connection between the in-school treatment of young U.S. born African boys and their overrepresentation within the criminal justice system. Structural racism operates within the United States education system in ways that have increasingly merged education with criminal surveillance and punishment. “Since the early 1990’s, many school districts have replaced a system of graduated sanctions with a “zero tolerance” approach to wrongdoing. The result is a near-doubling of the number of students suspended annually from school since 1974 (from 1.7 million to 3.1 million), an increase in the presence of police in schools, in the use of**

metal detectors and search and seizure procedures in schools, and the enactment of new state laws mandating referral of children to law enforcement authorities for a variety of school code violations. Minorities are heavily overrepresented among those most harshly sanctioned in schools. In 2000, Blacks represented 17% of the student population, but 34% of those suspended. Nationally, Black students are 2.6 times as likely to be suspended as White students” (Wald, Losen, 2003). Lazarus’s reflected on his family’s move to Georgia.

*“I was always living in the projects when I came here or whatever, you know, because I grew up in the projects. Them was my people, no matter what as a kid, I’m in the projects, so anyway, I’m like these folks so green down here. I just couldn’t believe how country, how slow, and how green the young folks was. I’m like, aw man, and how easy it was to move and manipulate them. It was like aw, they so easy to manipulate down here, so I’m like, I just went crazy” –*

Lazarus

**During this time, Lazarus’s entire world went through a major shift when his father passed. This loss may have contributed to a period of psychological and emotional instability in Lazarus. It was clear that he felt regretful for putting off the trip to see his father and choosing to chase miniscule profit instead. Lazarus’s brother continued to be diametrically opposed to him, even in his reaction to their father’s passing.**

*“I was supposed to be back in Indianapolis for my sister’s birthday because my mother, she had a job, she was working for Delta here in Atlanta, in Decatur,*

*I could fly on, not really a buddy pass, but it's a relative, whatever, you know what I'm saying? But basically, we had flight privileges or whatever, so I could go any day. And I kept telling my dad, I was like, the plane ain't here yet, and I kept texting him like, I promise I'll be there, and I wasn't there because I had things going down. I had a move I was trying to make. I was going to make a couple hundred dollars on this move. This guy, he had already stole a car. I had to get the stuff out. I had the wheels and I was just waiting for this guy to get paid. Long story short, I blew off my sister's birthday. Next thing I know, June 13, the day after my sister's birthday, I was asleep and my mama came in my room and I remember, I heard the phone ring, you know, because it was real late, 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. My mom came in my room and I was like, yea, yea. And then she said I just got off the phone. It's about your father, and I automatically knew he was gone. I mean, I knew he was gone as soon as she, it's almost like weird man, I knew he was gone as soon as she walked in the room" – Lazarus*

*"Never really got a chance to know my father too much. At a young age, he passed away, and he wasn't with us" – Lazarus's Brother*

*"I went to take Daddy to dialysis, he was laying on the floor dead with his wheelchair laying on his leg. He had been in severe pain, and Daddy couldn't stand pain. We called Lazarus and he was just, he was sad" – Lazarus's Sister*

**The school did not address Lazarus's psychological or emotional state. He was expelled without any inquiry into what he was going through at home. This lack of concern**

**or insight may be an aspect of the societal criminalization and lack of empathy towards U.S. born Africana boys.**

*“So we in Atlanta, and he died. We went back to the funeral. He had this huge motorcycle funeral, people in four or five states, it was off the chain. We get back here, and it’s like I’m 15, and it’s almost like, man I don’t know what it was, I just, when I got back here, when I went to school, that first year of 9th grade, man I got expelled from Southwest DeKalb High School after two months being there.” – Lazarus*

*“You know, I didn’t cry or anything, but like a week after I just, it’s weird man, it’s like I felt lost, but it felt like, I felt like I was by myself. It’s like, it was crazy, even though I got my mom, but it’s like my mom, she’s a female, she ain’t live the life and that’s who I was. I thought that’s who I was. I thought that, you know, this is the way I want to live or whatever. I was very much affected because I used to have dreams, I used to dream about my father a lot. Sometimes they were the realest dreams I ever had in my life. I dream about talking to him on the phone and stuff like that. My father, he was real wise, although he had misunderstood a lot of stuff, you know. My mentality was, and I probably got a little from him too, but it became different, like I said my father did so much for everybody. I did only if it benefitted me. I became very, very selfish” – Lazarus*

*“I got expelled from Southwest DeKalb High school because this white security guard lied on me. So, I’m watching out, I’m the lookout, and the dude does it, he did everything. Next thing I know, I get pulled out of class and they take me down to the Vice Principal’s office and they say, you know, they said that you stole this out of this car, so and so. I said well if I stole something out of the car, if he saw me, I said why didn’t he arrest me then? I didn’t steal nothing out of no car, you know. The white man got in my face and he was like, just hollering at me talking about you stole this and whatever, you know, I don’t even know what he said, but I had a temper. Next thing I know, I’m locked up.” – Lazarus*

**Lazarus was very clear about the psychological and emotional impact of the expulsion.**

*“That made me feel like I was shit, and it made me feel worse because I’m sitting with this black man that’s Vice Principal Benjamin or whatever, and he’s believing it, and I’m like no I didn’t. I did not steal the stuff. The dude knew it was in my trunk and everything, so I went off and hit the dude, you know. I hit the old white dude and he called the police on me. I think I was probably more upset that this black guy, it was maybe about..., you know the hurting. I was mad at the white guy, but I was hurt because the black man believed the white guy. Just like, fuck you white man, but it hurt me. You know what I’m saying, and that made me madder so I was probably striking out, come to think of it, I was probably striking out because this black man done abandoned me” – Lazarus*

*“Let me tell you, just so you know, that perp walk. When they took me out in handcuffs, I was in the assistant principal’s office. They, everybody could see the handcuffs. I call it the perp walk. Cause I’m walking down past all these classrooms and people looking outside, you know, man I’m so embarrassed. I had my head down. And then sometimes they caught me looking, and I’m like I’m, whatever you know, **I was scared to death. When I said scared, I was terrified, I was embarrassed.** I was more embarrassed than I was terrified because I just wanted to get out. I just wanted to get in the police car. I remember saying man, I just want to get in the police car so bad. My image is everything man, and it’s like, man, I was kind of glad I got kicked out. I was too embarrassed to go back, really” – Lazarus*

**Capitalism eclipsed all of Lazarus’s other psychological drives. He seemed to bury his fear, pain, and shame in lieu of becoming an accomplished unsanctioned capitalist.**

*“I let my mother down. I was such a disappointment or whatever, you know. It was crazy, although I know I let her down and was such a disappointment, but I still did the shit. You know my brother had made all As and Bs, you know, I couldn’t get in school. I come down here, you know, and I was just a big disappointment, you know. But I still had this thing, I was, I don’t know,*

*I can't put a finger on it, but I was always hustling. I was always trying to find a way to make some money, trying to find a come up, you know. Man, I'd go in people's houses, my friends houses, and I mean, so called people in the neighborhood houses, I had done found out they went on vacation, kid told me they was going on a family vacation, oh shit, I was all up in that damn house. It was just messed up man, you know, and I can tell you, **I probably needed some psychological help growin' up**" – Lazarus*

### **Key Relationships before incarceration**

**Lazarus's closest relationships before prison did not consist explicitly of family and friends, but more of "business associates." These associates represented Lazarus's selfishness and lack of trust. It should be noted that, in many ways he was more vulnerable in this state than he had been as a child. As Lazarus spiraled into his unsanctioned economic pursuits, having buried his emotional and psychological damage, he became most susceptible to being ensnared by the criminal justice system. The lure of higher and higher financial incentives clearly outweighed the high possibility of him being apprehended. Lazarus's ego was inflated at this point. His misplaced sense of self and accomplishment was at its height.**

*"I been locked up 4, 5, 6 or 7 times, you know. I've only been locked up 3 times as an adult. I've only gone to jail as an adult three times, three or four, yea, just three. The first time I got locked up with the little quarter, I was just coming up. Then I had me an apartment. That was my first apartment by myself or whatever, you know in Stone Mountain, nice little spot. I was on the rise then. A*

*good friend of mine, who' father looked after me once mine had passed. We got caught in a stolen car with drugs on us. He almost died trying to swallow his and I ended up going to jail.” – Lazarus*

*“I got a little scholarship to Voorhees College, but I kept hustling though. If I get kicked out, I'm just going to go until I get kicked out. I get paid to go to Savannah, dope money, Savannah State College, and there was this girl, The Misses. She was just like beautiful. She was this AKA and she was a, what you call it, a upperclassman, and I don't know man, she was a dream man. So, I made it through one or two semesters before a couple of bad robberies went down and you know, like I said, I got ran up out of Savannah, but I kept in touch with The Misses.” – Lazarus*

*“My sister was extremely important to me. My sister was huge. She was in Indianapolis. My boys, my cats who worked for me because it's like, we did stuff that I'm not even going to tell you, you know. You know the boys I told you about” – Lazarus*

*“A couple of years later, I was like, I was a millionaire, I had everything I always wanted but The Misses. I started sending her flowers like every other day, sent notes, she didn't know who the flowers were from for a long time. I had a phone line installed in her room and all kinds of stuff, you know, I went after her real, real hard. It took me a while man, and she fell for me or whatever and you*

*know, I got engaged to her, and she graduated from Savannah State College as a schoolteacher or whatever and then I got locked up.” – Lazarus*

**Theme 2: Lived Experiences and Worldview DURING incarceration (DEATH/THE UNDERWORLD)**

*“The law in prison is fear” – Lazarus*

*“There were times you feel intense fear, but you just deal with it. I mean, you don’t, you definitely try not to show it because you are a man in a place among other men, and fear and anxiety is a sign of weakness, and weakness gets preyed upon.” – Lazarus’s Fellow P.O.W.*

**Lazarus descended into the archetypal underworld. Perhaps weighed down by his deeds and possessions, he found himself caught, tangled in his own web of misguided motivations and decisions. It was within the underworld where Lazarus experienced untold horrors, trauma inducing experiences that would eventually result in his transformation, yet it left him psychologically scarred. Additionally, Lazarus’s family was impacted as well. The collateral damage resulting from incarceration, and the inequalities associated with structural racism became increasingly evident as the various narratives connected with one another. Archetypally, the underworld represents a “place of psychological horror and destruction.” “The ascent out of the archetypal underworld often signals a transformational period or a rebirth of the protagonist” (McCoppin, 2015).**

## **Relevant Dimension 1: Trauma and Burden**

### **Broken Bonds – The Misses**

**Lazarus’s engagement was short lived. His incarceration forced him to leave his new love behind.**

*“You know, it was pretty rough. It was pretty rough on me and her, but I was taking care of her. I had a whole lot of cars and stuff or whatever, which I over several years, lost everything, including her. It was probably 9 or 10 months after I got locked up because I saw how many dudes was like losing their mind trying to run their household from prison.” – Lazarus*

*“My sister told me, let her go Lazarus. You got to let her go. Don’t do that to that girl. Don’t do that to that girl. You making her do that time with you. She didn’t sell that dope. She didn’t do that. Don’t do that to that girl. So, I finally said man, my sister was right. I really cared about her too much to make her wait for me. I think she would have waited for me man. I think she would have, but I couldn’t do it to her.” – Lazarus*

### **Evidence: Broken Bonds – Nephew**

**Lazarus’s Nephew typified aspects of the kind of psychological and emotional impacts that structural racism via the criminal justice system has the potential to inflict upon an already criminalized and socioeconomically vulnerable population.**

*“And you know you take away your primary source and you know what I mean, it becomes hard. He was like, he was like the bread winner, or whatever. He lightened up the load basically. I felt like it was like up to the next person to take over, but at the same time, it was like, you don’t expect that. You hear about things happening, but for it to happen, you know what I mean, to the main person, you know what I’m saying? I looked at it like it’s time to step up. You know people counting on the male in the family, the males in the family you know, there’s only a few actually, you know what I mean?”* – Lazarus’s Nephew

*“Lazarus was the one helping out and making it make sense, so... Yea, I was one of the ones that stepped up. I ended up, you know, I started doing marijuana. I was selling marijuana, a couple of bricks as well. It was time for somebody else to step up, you know, cause things started getting out of control.”* – Lazarus’s Nephew

*“I picked up selling coke too. I was probably about 21, between 19 and 21, because I graduated when I was 17, and went off to college and came back, so yea, about 18. I started selling when I came back from college.”* – Lazarus’s Nephew

**It was disturbingly easy for Lazarus’s nephew to slip into the same unsanctioned economic activity as his uncle. Lazarus’s incarceration seemed to have a much heavier impact on his family in Indianapolis than on his mother and brother in Georgia (whose relationship with Lazarus had been strained since he was expelled and began hustling full time). From his nephew’s perspective, Lazarus’s incarceration through his family into**

**chaos, and though he was in college at the time, the lack of support and the instability impacted his education.**

*“When I went off to college, I mean, wasn’t no real support there, you know. No physical support, no financial support, no nothing. When I say support, I mean, like people encouraging you, you know, calling you, checking up on you.”*

– Lazarus’s Nephew

*“It was like I was in college, out of sight, out of mind. Everybody was rooting for me, but at the same time, their actions wasn’t lining up with their mouth, you know what I mean?”*

*While everybody was worried about what’s going on at home, I was out of sight, out of mind. I was in another city. I’m in Michigan, in another state, so I’m trying to make it make sense. wasn’t no support in college, so I came back and started hustling. Then that’s when everybody, you know, starting gravitating back to me, you know, but when I was in school, people kind of forgot about me.” –*

Lazarus’s Nephew

*“Like I couldn’t sit up there and pout, you know I’m a teenager, but at the same time, I’m off in college. It’s a big deal in the family, ain’t too many in the family actually made it make sense with college. I think given the financial situation people were in at the time because when Lazarus left, you know, it put everybody in a strain. I think it was more financial, and then you know, people got other lives and children and stuff, so you know, people just can’t up and leave*

*their family, or their situation, to come help you out. There wasn't enough financial stability in the family as a core for people to be able to come out and support. I felt neglected. I felt upset. I felt like, you know, people abandoned me in so many ways. It's like here it is. You know, we was strong I guess when the money was around, but when the money started disappearing and people getting locked up and the family started splitting up. You could tell that the money somewhat kept us together as the glue, but I thought it was genuine love, but I realized that it was more what I could do for someone than actually the true love I felt.” – Lazarus's Nephew*

**Lazarus's relationship with his brother remained strained.**

### **Broken Bonds – Brother**

*“Like I said, Lazarus and I weren't close growing up. I didn't really have a feeling toward it. Like I said, we weren't close as brothers, so I didn't have no feelings, I mean I didn't like the situation, you know I don't like that for anybody, so I didn't really like that at all. As far as being emotionally hurt or anything like that, I can't really say I was. really. Well actually, not at all. Still, it was a*

*nonviolent crime, so definitely I didn't agree with any of that kind of sentencing for nonviolent crimes.” – Lazarus's Brother*

### **Mother**

**Lazarus's mother seemed quietly disturbed as she recalled her eldest son's incarceration and her experiences with the criminal justice system. She mentioned managing her fear but was very hesitant to go into detail about how the experiences made her feel.**

*“I did not know what he was doing when he was doing it, but he came and talked to me the evening before he was to go away, or maybe a couple of days before he was actually scheduled to go. He sat down and he told me everything. I felt strange, like you know, I was trying to understand, I was wondering why he would do that and how he got so involved in it, and, I know he's always been greedy for the dollar. I was frustrated, anxious, worried, and upset.” – Lazarus's Mother*

*“I'm sure his brother was very disappointed, you know, like I said, it was a strange time. We didn't understand. His sister, I really can't speak for her. She's a half-sister, even though they're very close. They love each other dearly, you know, we all get along well, but she did not grow up in the household with them, but he still, they have a good relationship. They talk, they visit one another, and I'm good with her, you know.” – Lazarus's Mother*

*“My mother’s a strong mother, so you know, she really didn’t show how it might have affected her if it did affect her any. It was just, you know, life as normal as far as me and her were concerned. If it affected her in any ways, emotionally, financially, I don’t know anything about that, that’s something that I didn’t get into talking to her about him.” – Lazarus’s Brother*

*“I visited him often. It wasn’t bad. It wasn’t bad at all. It was like, he looked okay, and he was in good spirits when I would go see him and stuff, so this helped a lot. And you know, I would send money to help support him and everything. The biggest peace that I had with it was in watching the news and seeing how many lives were lost because of similar activities, how many, you know the police had to basically take down, they would go down in a blaze of glory and I said I didn’t have to go through that. I tried not to let any of it bother me. I prayed a lot.” – Lazarus’s Mother*

### **Financial Burdens**

*“I tried to scrape enough together to, because he had asked me about getting an attorney who thought they could reduce his sentence and this type of thing, so I did, you know, that was a financial strain, but I got over it. I got it together, what the attorney asked me for, but I don’t think she really did anything,*

*so you know... My other son was, he was on his own. He had finished school and was working, taking care of himself.” – Lazarus’s Mother*

*“I didn’t have a job. I had my six little bitty kids, it was hard. But I got that money together for my brother. Let me tell you, that was when my son had became a teenager, my son, my nephews and stuff, my great nephews rather, I told them hey, y’all better come on with it. I need to go and see Lazarus. Yea, I need some gas money. I need some money to feed him because he likes to eat, you know what I’m saying, and I would bring him so many hamburgers cause he ain’t eating his meat and he ain’t eating his beans. He don’t drink pop. He wants juice so I had to buy him all the juice, he wanted Welch’s juice or something like that, grape juice and things like that. But you know, the pop was cheaper. I needed money. I did whatever I had to do.” – Lazarus’s Sister*

### **Dissonance: Sister**

**Lazarus’s sister presented an interesting case in that she was the only family member who explicitly expressed that his incarceration made them closer. She explained to me some experiences that were evidence of this from her perspective. Unlike his mother and brother, Lazarus’s sister seemed to have considerably less qualms about structural legalities. She risked her life for her brother.**

*“It made us closer. It made us close, do you know I would cry when I couldn’t go see my brother. Did you hear what I said? I said I would cry, I’d fall*

*out. Sometimes it would get so bad, I would tell my son, y'all better give me some money so I can go see my brother” – Lazarus’s Sister*

*“I’m telling you, I got a friend Renee. Renee look like a boy. Renee is in prison right now for murder. She’s doing 50 years in a women’s prison. Renee came in, they thought she was a little boy because she got a little baby face, she came in as a child, a little boy, she went in the back for me and had sex with Lazarus.” – Lazarus’s Sister*

*“I love him so, so much that I went and got him, I escaped him from federal prison camp. You hear me? I went in and he escaped. I went and got him one night after I come from the club partying, I went and got him one night and I took him to his girlfriend’s house. Guess what? He came out. I had fell asleep. He gone say, the bitch said that she had a headache. I said Lazarus, she got another boyfriend... What do you mean? He said. I said; Your man come all the way home from prison, he done escaped, his sister done come from Indianapolis and went and got him and they done escaped, and I got my life on the line. They couldn’t get me on this case, I had these six kids, you hear me? I could not afford with six children, I could not afford to get in trouble to no ties nowhere, let alone in Georgia. I took Lazarus to her house, she said she had a headache. I told my brother, I said, she got another boyfriend and leave her alone. I didn’t like her no way. I told him, you don’t need The Misses. All you done done, come on man. a headache!?!?” – Lazarus’s Sister*

*“That right there, that tells you that’s how I feel about my brother to be a part of his escape, and I took him back. And I watched him to make sure that they didn’t shoot him or nothing. I watched my brother. Now imagine, if I had watched my brother and they had shot him down and killed him, you know what I’m saying? What if I had to live with that? But I watched him run all the way, as far as I could see him no more and there he was. And I went to see him the next day. That’s how I knew he was okay because you know he couldn’t call me or nothing like that.” – Lazarus’s Sister*

## **Relevant Dimension 2: Violence, Punishment, and Transformation**

**Lazarus’s archetypal descent into the underworld involved some intense violence, but the time spent in the underworld also yielded a very meaningful transformation regarding Lazarus’s worldview and behavior. Lazarus underwent a process of culturally relevant, African-centered self-education that aided in a transformation of consciousness for him. Still, his growth came at a great psychological price. Fear, anxiety, sleep deprivation, as well as various physiological injuries, plagued Lazarus during his incarceration.**

*“I never slept very well, because I didn’t ever sleep well on the streets. In prison, you got to be able to put the covers over your head and you have to be able to escape that space.” – Lazarus*

*“I started reading so much, and I started talking, and when I started speaking about the things I was reading about, like African American culture, and you know how when you watch a great movie, and you want to go tell your friends about it that movie or whatever, because it really meant a lot to you, that’s how books were to me when I first started reading in prison books about African American awareness and different things, and I’d go and tell people. All I wanted to do was tell people about this new knowledge I was getting, the new understanding I was getting about being black or whatever, you know, cause it felt so good to me.” – Lazarus*

**Lazarus clearly began to reflect on the ways in which he interacted within his environments prior to his incarceration. The reflections seemed to have some impact on the subsequent changes in his thinking and behavior.**

*“The situation with snitching was scary though. because I didn’t have any morals on the street. We didn’t have any morals, we didn’t have any integrity on the streets, so all of a sudden you go to jail and supposed to get a case of integrity? Hell no. We talked that garbage, but nah, we don’t care about nothing. We don’t care about anything but ourselves in the street life or whatever, you know, these are pawns, so we do what we got to do, but still we living like a double consciousness because in our minds we know good and well we ain’t going to jail for nobody else and we going to tell on everybody we can most of the time.” – Lazarus*

**Lazarus's self-education also stimulated in him a critical consciousness. He began analyzing his former environments in relation to the broader structural racism and discourses on power in the U.S.**

*“Everybody lives this fake veneer over their face. but when you sitting behind that hot lamp, and these folks are trained in what I call “tricknology”, they go to school, there’s seminars, on how to pull information out of young folks, how to trick them out of information, you know. It’s like the little kid, you know, you give a couple of lollipops til your mama tells you don’t get in the car with nobody else, don’t get in the car with nobody else, but the man had some lollipops and drawing you over there, and you get in the car with them and you know you’re not supposed to get in the car with them, that’s kind of how it is, you know you ain’t supposed to talk to no police, but you get there, you scared, they’re authority figures, they’re white, and then they offer you these lollipops, and they tell you things. The lollipop is like a, it’s like a gift, but its nothing, it’s like 25 cents, it’s not worth anything, it’s your integrity, so basically I’m offering you a chance to get this invisible time cut off that you ain’t even got yet.” – Lazarus*

*“I was standing up because a lot of times, it’s like when you know stuff, when you actually without reasonable doubt know something, you can’t sit by, it’s hard to sit by and allow things to go on or pressure to go on when you know, and you have to speak up about it. So, I would stand up for other inmates, I would file*

*paperwork on behalf of other inmates myself because I said I got to fight for people who don't know how to fight for themselves.” – Lazarus*

*“I was in Manchester, Kentucky, which we called Klanchester. We called it Klanchester because it was a prison built out of an old coal-mine, and from my window, I was in D dorm, and from my bedroom window I could look out through the fences and bars and I could see the guards driving up. Some of the, a lot of the guard's cars had confederate flags and have little racist bumper stickers or whatever, and they was straight racist to you.” – Lazarus*

*“**I was always paranoid.** I was, maybe not the whole 7 years, but I would always be paranoid to an extent, but what it is, is like, in prison, you either the predator or you prey. Bubba's a killer, you know, because you growing up on the streets, the killers, the ones who have the most infamous, the most notorious, those were your heroes in the hood, you know, and you like you know this person ain't going to go soft. You know this person ain't going to go weak. Because you think of going soft and weak, if they tell on a crime or whatever you know, and **that's a hell of a psychosis that we don't even realize.**” – Lazarus*

*“In prison, everybody is paranoid. you have the guards, but you have the black inmates, who actually run all your prisons. And honestly, it's like we behind the Warden, and people follow what black people do because we are the dominant culture in prison. So what I mean is like, bottom line, when you come into this*

*place, it's like Gladiator school, you know, you don't know what's going to happen, but the bottom line, you know we have three things in prison. We have three sayings, fuck, fight or check in, and what I mean is that when you go to prison, you got to be a person who is going to fuck, or you got to be a person who is going to fight, or you got a person who is going to call the guards and say I need to be put in protective custody, and that's the hardest time you can do is doing most of your time in the hole because you still check in because you scared.” – Lazarus*

*“So, the SPORT team, they come in their gear, the ties, the boots, everything, and the very first thing that they did, and they came for a reason because prisons around the country were rioting because crack law did not go through and so, they locked down the federal penitentiary, the Atlanta prison, and they forced, they locked it down, and they locked us down, before anyone took off. So warden Willie Scott came through with this special riot team to the very first man they beat. They beat a blind man. This man was 100% blind, in 1995, it was 1996, and it was on the news too, beat a 100% blind man in front of people, I mean this man, he wasn't legally blind, this man was Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, blind. Old man, blind, they beat this man, they said he didn't move fast enough. What they told us to do is everybody get on your bed, sit, pull your shirts over your head, but do not pull your shirts all the way over your head, lay on your bed face down, alright? Then next thing we heard was Mr. Tony getting beat. Mr. Tony was another old black man. You heard this man getting beat, and you heard*

*people get up and then next thing you heard “bam, bam, bam, bam”, ah, ah, screaming, screaming, screaming! So the people who did try to get up off the bed when they heard Mr. Tony get beat, they got beat down and crushed, I mean just beat, beat, beat. And they going around beating people randomly, you know, and let me tell you the worst part of that whole thing. It was not the beating. It was not the beating, that wasn't it. The worst part of the whole thing is I'm a man, and I'm laying down on this damn bed, and I hear this old man get beat, and I hear these other people get beat. But I'm so fucking weak and I'm such a mother fucking coward, I am not getting up to help them.” – Lazarus*

*“We had an incident when The Million Man March, and this was more the guards more so than the inmates. The Million Man March had occurred back in 1995 and long story, so I ain't going to get into it, but they ended up sending the riot squad, they call them the SPORT team, Special Operations Reactionary Team, down to what they called might be an uprising.” – Lazarus's Fellow P.O.W.*

*“It wasn't really happening, there was no actual uprising. So this was like what they call preventive, they did it preventively because of what happened with The Million Man March, and everybody was hyped up about you know, we seen it on television and you know we incarcerated, but we still men. **We still black men and we still have an affiliation for what's going on outside.** They sent their SPORT teams through and they came through cracking heads with batons and boots and marching through and you know a show of force, a show of their force*

*to say hey, you know y'all may be the inmates, but you not gone run the asylum."*

– Lazarus's Fellow P.O.W.

*"Oh yea, yea, definitely, they hurt a lot of people. I got thrown into solitary confinement for no reason to be honest and never was charged with anything, and after two months I was let go. Okay, you out of solitary confinement, investigation over. There couldn't have been no investigation, I hadn't done anything. Yea, there was some guys I saw with stitches and heads busted, but nobody died or anything, but it was some actions against them, some violence acts against them and I don't think that they were retaliating, I think they was just, you know, them initiating it, them instigating it. Just being like I said, we coming through, maybe you wasn't moving fast enough, not so much that you were resisting, but that you wasn't moving fast enough. You just got ran over because that was the way they were trained to handle the situation."* – Lazarus's

Fellow P.O.W.

### **Psychological Trauma - Solitary Confinement**

**The U.S. was the first country in the world to introduce solitary confinement as a means for dealing with criminal behavior. "Solitary confinement—that is the confinement of a prisoner alone in a cell for all, or nearly all, of the day with minimal environmental stimulation and minimal opportunity for social interaction—can cause severe psychiatric harm. It has indeed long been known that severe restriction of environmental and social stimulation has a profoundly deleterious effect on mental**

functioning.” The negative psychological impacts of solitary confinement have ranged from delusion to hallucinations. “A major body of clinical literature developed documented the psychiatric disturbances created by such stringent conditions of confinement. The paradigmatic psychiatric disturbance was an agitated confusional state which, in more severe cases, had the characteristics of a florid delirium, characterized by severe confusional, paranoid, and hallucinatory features, and also by intense agitation and random, impulsive, often self-directed violence” (Grassian, 2006). The more Lazarus’s behavior began to reflect his shift in consciousness, the more punishment he seemed to endure at the hands of the state.

*“When you in jail, we refer to the hole as jail, solitary confinement was the hole. I didn’t care anything about the hole because they would take away my books or take away my pen, but I would have one or the other, so that’s why I kept fighting because humanity became more important to me than my personal physical condition” Lazarus*

*“When inmates started to gravitate towards me, that’s when I was put into solitary confinement, transferred around to different prisons.” – Lazarus*

*“All the time I was in solitary confinement, you got certain inmate prison rights. Well none of those rights were followed with me.” – Lazarus*

*“I was in solitary confinement, in a couple of prisons, you know, heat was turned like in the wintertime, heat was turned off, and they would play games with the heat, and the air conditioning. Once when I was in there, they wouldn’t give me a shower. It took six days to take a shower, and I was burnt up, no air*

*conditioning, and you might not know this, but if you don't shower, and you hot and sweat, your skin starts breaking, you know, it's like you develop these cuts and stuff like that, and you itch and you scratch into your skin man. I mean I used to wash with toilet water because of the inhumane treatment and this was at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary."* – Lazarus

*"In the solitary I felt Helpless, It's scary. You're in there, and you know, you have all sorts of thoughts. You know, I can remember always thinking like, something crazy, what if everybody died in this building or in this world and I'm stuck in this cell, and nobody is going to let me out ever, or at night when you're in there, and you know, that seemed to be the time of the evening when some of the guys were the loudest in the cell block. They hollering, they screaming, they singing, they just, you know, all night long. It's like they sleep all day I guess and holler all night. It's not something that I ever would wish on anybody because your mind has a whole lot of...when you have that much time... that much alone time, you do a lot of praying. I'm not a very religious person, but they allowed me to have a Bible"* – Lazarus's Fellow P.O.W.

### **Psychological – Behavioral Transformation**

**Lazarus became a Muslim while incarcerated. His acceptance of the faith was not the cause, but rather a symptom of the transformation of consciousness that took place as he began to aggressively re-educate himself. Though it is not conclusive that Lazarus's culturally relevant re-education reduced his psychological stress/strain, it does seem to**

**have promoted an increased sense of well-being within him, granting him a renewed sense of purpose apart from accumulation of capital, as well as serving as a coping mechanism.**

*“I became Muslim, becoming a Muslim in prison is one of the most profound things and the very thing that a lot of black men go through this transformation.” – Lazarus*

*“We’re never told that we are human beings. you’re a child, and you’re watching all this stuff, you’re seeing all this stuff around your community, so the fact you seeing it subconsciously, although you told it’s wrong, you can’t prove it wrong because it keeps happening. So you end up in prison. So I’m saying as a black man, you already there, you know. George Jackson said something. Georgia Jackson was a famous black man. He died in 1971. He said, **I was conditioned to go to prison at the age of 18, he said black men in America that grow up I think in poverty, are conditioned to go to prison. It just takes minor psychic adjustment.**” – Lazarus*

*“I wouldn’t shut up about what I was reading. The most dangerous, let me tell you something. **The most dangerous thing to a system of oppression, and believe me, the United States Penal System is a system of oppression. It is more of a system of oppression. It’s never been a system of rehabilitation. That is a lie. It’s been a system to oppress, and to further oppress what society feels are undesirables.**” – Lazarus*

### Psychological Trauma - Diesel Therapy

The psychological devastation caused by solitary confinement is well documented.

In Grassian's (2006) study of over two hundred prisoners in various state and federal penitentiaries, he noted that, "for many of the inmates so housed, incarceration in solitary caused either severe exacerbation or recurrence of preexisting illness, or the appearance of an acute mental illness in individuals who had previously been free of any such illness."

Diesel therapy is an extension of solitary confinement punishment methodologies, a kind of isolation in motion, where inmates subjected to it are not allowed to rest as they are constantly moved from facility to facility.

*"Diesel therapy is sleep deprivation, that's that sleep deprivation."* –

Lazarus

*"I was put on diesel therapy, which federal prison systems deny. With diesel therapy, it's a major sleep deprivation where they come get you out of your cell at any given time of the night, and they put you in handcuffs and shackles, like all of a sudden, bam! You woken up out of your sleep, and bright lights come on and you got to get up immediately. Slap on handcuffs and shackles, then you got to walk forever, then for hours at a time you sitting in a holding cell in shackles and handcuffs waiting to get on a bus. Then you taken around and you may get on this bus finally and you taken about 150-200 miles to another county jail. You go through the same process about 3 or 4 hours, then as soon as you lay down on a hard floor...because you in an overcrowded jail, it's a hard-concrete floor, or a*

*concrete bed. And its always with a different temperature, because everywhere is a different temperature, I got colds. You get sick and everything else, and you do the same process again the next day or a couple of days later. And this went on for months. Half the time I was delirious. I didn't know if I was coming or going. Really, when you say people see pink elephants, there was no doubt in my mind I was seeing stuff that was so real, I could put my hand out to it. There was a real 3D shape, but it wasn't real. **Your mind was playing because you're so delirious.**" – Lazarus*

### **Theme 3: Lived Experiences and Worldview AFTER incarceration (REBIRTH)**

#### **Relevant Dimension 1: Transformation and Redemption**

**In an archetypal sense, Lazarus was reborn through his sufferings in the underworld. He emerged from his imprisonment with a renewed consciousness, and a changed relationship to his family, friends and community. Unlike the statistical norm, Lazarus never returned to the criminal justice system. The kinship networks he was able to form while incarcerated appeared to play a vital role in his transformation of consciousness.**

*"At times, I felt more free more than anyplace in my life when I was in prison. I'm going to tell you why. I felt free when I had this love, when you got these brothers in prison, and it's a family, it's deeper than being a gang on the street, because these brothers you live with 24/7, 24 hours a day, and you tell them all your intimate thoughts and everything, and they tell you everything, you know, and you form this brotherhood, you form this bond" – Lazarus*

**Again, Lazarus's culturally centered re-education was key to his psychological and behavioral transformation.**

*“Basically, I want to talk like these brothers. I just want y’all to give me the game because I had never heard anybody talk so poetically and so well, and hold their heads up high, and talk to white people, which was the guards, or to black people, which was guards too or whatever. It was gangster the way they be talking. They be so cool and calm, and then they would break down black history and stuff” – Lazarus*

*“Now I could sit up and look and read pages and my eyes and my mind was just trained to jump into this conscious, you know what I’m saying, this subconsciousness and create the world based on the words that I read. It was totally different. It was like so many emotions went through me because that book started moving me from, made me realize that I was not a man, and made me realize that I was a male, and it helped me through from maleness to manhood, and it was a hell of a transformation.” – Lazarus*

*“After that book, it’s like so many emotions went through me, and so many times I kept saying man, this is common sense, but I ain’t never, man this shit’s*

*common sense. I ain't never thought about it like that, and I was mad at myself for all this shit I did, you know. – Lazarus*

*“It opened up my consciousness to see that all of this so called reality, #I was structured by people in a system who never meant for poor people that looked like me to be free. So, it opened up things like, it made me think like, so why would I think that they would send me to schools to be educated? It also made me think, this was before I read Miseducation of the Negro, and that was like my second or third book. It made me think why would they let us go to schools, all these different things, you know, when historically they done everything to oppress people of color all around the world. It was just things like that. It was so many thing such as that, and it just” . . . – Lazarus*

## **Relevant Dimension 2: Relationships and Revelations**

### **Relationships and Revelations of Kinship**

**Lazarus’s transformation included a reconnection of some key relationships. There were self-reported improvements in his relationships with his mother and his younger brother. He also retained a significant relationship with a fellow inmate which facilitated a business relationship between the two, helping to mediate the usual issues of finding employment post-incarceration.**

#### **Mother**

*“Me and my mother’s relationship is so close because now I’m just so proud that I’m the son that she deserves. That’s the biggest thing in the world,*

*because my mom followed me around from prison to prison and everything.” – Lazarus*

### **Brother**

*“I’m much closer to my brother right now. This is the same person that I wanted to kill, same person who messed up all this money, so close to him right now, and it’s just because of understanding that money ain’t nothing.” – Lazarus*

*“Once he realized I guess what he did or didn’t do as far as to make our relationship better because him being the other brother, he changed that. That’s when he changed and he I guess more so acknowledged that and confessed it, so that’s what ultimately started changing our relationship.*

*As far as him now, I’m very proud of him now because like I say, back then, saw what he was trying and going towards, but now his accomplishments are great, and I really look more so like now, although I’m grown, and not ever too late, but I look at him more now as a big brother, something I can look up to, way more now than I did then. Then I didn’t see a difference between us besides him being an enemy, now I see a brother figure. I feel like not only in schooling and outside of himself, but even inside of himself, mentally and spiritually, I see a big change and a big difference and which it’s for the better. I appreciate it and I’m proud of him at the same time” – Lazarus’s Brother*

### **Friend**

*“We started a publishing company together, we both had a love of books, and we became business partners, not just friends, but became business partners. Our publishing company was semi successful, wasn’t as successful as we had hoped for, but we did publish, he was actually the author, I was more the editor and supply man and bookkeeper and everything, but he wrote several books, 10 or 11 books that we got published and distributed as much as we could through magazines, subscriptions to getting out and pounding the pavement ourselves and selling the book. We sold a lot of books to inmates” – Lazarus’s Fellow P.O.W.*

### **Sister/Nephew**

*“I’m so proud of my sister and my nephews” – Lazarus*

### **Relationships and Revelations of Community**

**Not only were Lazarus’s relationships with his friends and family transformed, but so too were his relationships with himself, and his community. His shift in consciousness was accompanied by a transformation in his worldview, values, beliefs, and behavior.**

### **Work**

*“So, I did my little reading and research while I was in prison, so I knew what the deal was. I wanted to write books, write about my life but I needed money to do it. So, when I got out, I got to the halfway house, I got a personal trainer certification while I was inside prison, and like I said, we didn’t have internet when I came to prison. It was amazing to me in 1999 when I got out, you know we got this internet thing. There was a computer at the halfway house, so I said okay, I need to make all this money so I can get this book out. So, I got to find the biggest, the baddest health club in Georgia, and I got to go be the manager of it.” – Lazarus*

*“All this stuff is coming from books I done read. I tell you what it’s from, it’s from Black Lies, White Lies, the true report of Tony Brown. He breaks down this thing when Ronald Regan went to Russia with Gorbachev, and how they was going back and forth arguing, and couldn’t come to a point, and all of a sudden, he just got up and started walking, and Gorbachev followed him because he had Gorbachev’s attention, and then he started talking because he was an actor, and I used that same game I learned from the book on Mark at the health club.” – Lazarus*

*“So, we get to the top of the stairs, we done been around the whole club talking, and he said look man, he said I cannot offer you a personal trainer manager position, but man you would be great in sales. I said sales? He said*

*look, I know you have so much experience and all at the clubs and stuff, and he said I can give you assistant sales manager's salary" – Lazarus*

*"They hired me and I broke the national sales record. By the time they had found out about my past I was pretty well established in the company so they didn't let me go." – Lazarus*

### **School**

*"I want to fight because knowing who I am, understanding my movements through history, it not only changed my mentality, it changed everything, it's changed how successful I've been. I have been extremely successful and have not had to work for anybody because I've had several businesses I was able to start on my own, and I pretty much, I dissolved all my businesses just so I could write. I didn't go back to school to get a job brother. I went back to school to learn more about myself and my people because learning about myself has gotten me this far, so if I learn more about my people, not just my people, more about humanity" – Lazarus*

*"You come up through the worst conditions and then you come up to the top of their education or whatever, that's more powerful than any type of financial, any type of money that you have because you done seen so much more and you done learned how to navigate, navigate from such a lower level than most people." – Lazarus*

### **Relationships and Revelations of Self**

*“Trust Company Bank came and pretty much tried to recruit me on a branch manager position. They knew about my record, they knew about my record. I made all these waves because this big man is killing them, you know, in membership sales or whatever, in Selling Power magazine. All I was doing this stuff for was to make enough money to live my dream to get my book out there, not just to get my book out there, to show people that we’re so much more than what the school books and history books tell us we are. It was a revelation to me man.*

*“I’m proud of the man that I’m becoming, not the man who I am, but the man that I’m becoming everyday. And I could never say that before. I could say that I’m proud because of the money I had, I’m proud because of all the women I had, but I wasn’t proud of myself. I didn’t see myself as somebody that people could look up to, and that feels damn good with people actually looking up to you, and to have the love for my brother, my mother, and you said relationships, man it’s like, it’s my relationships with humanity man that has changed.” – Lazarus*

### **Current Mental Health: The OQ--45.2**

In an effort to further contextualize the findings by examining Lazarus’s current mental health, the PI administered the OQ - 45.2, evaluated by the committee chair Dr. Makungu

Akinyela. The OQ – 45.2 is a 45 item self-report instrument requiring a subject to rate their functioning on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument is designed to assess common symptoms across a range of adult mental disorders and syndromes, including stress related illness. The instrument particularly identifies stress in three areas; Symptom Distress; Interpersonal Relations; and Social Role distress. Lazarus's Evaluation is as follows:

The participant is a forty-seven-year-old U.S. born African man who is a former prisoner of the US Federal prison system. The participant was administered the OQ -45.2 Outcome Questionnaire which he completed on his own without verbal prompting. Despite the positive outcomes of Lazarus's shift in consciousness and his subsequent shift in behavior, there appears to be some definite psychological damage in the form of chronic stress/strain. The mental health impact implied within these results seems to correlate not merely with Lazarus's experiences with structural racism via the criminal justice system, but with his lived experience within a broader society characterized by structural racism. Even with his post-incarceration successes, Lazarus disclosed that he still lives with the stigma of being an "ex-convict." A stigmatization that he maintains impacts the way that people of all racial groups treat and interact with him.

Lazarus's Symptom Distress (SD) Score was 38, indicating that he may be bothered by symptoms of anxiety or depression. The SD Score ranges from 0-100, with a clinical cut-off score of 36 or more, which indicates symptoms of clinical significance. His Interpersonal Relations Score (IR) was 25, indicating that he may be experiencing poor interpersonal relationships with family and or friends who are emotionally important to him. The participant may be experiencing loneliness and conflicts with family and close associates. The IR Score ranges from 0-44, with a clinical cut off score of 15 or more, which indicates symptoms of

clinical significance. Lazarus's Social Relations (SC) Score was 16, which indicates that he may experience conflict or problems at work, school or other social environments. He may also be experiencing overwork and a feeling of inefficiency in his social environment, a key component of the generation of stress/strain in P-E fit theory. The SC score ranges from 0-36, with a clinical cut-off score of 12 or more indicating clinical significance. Lazarus's total score was 79, which indicates that he may be experiencing a large number of symptoms of distress including anxiety, stress and somatic problems. He may be experiencing interpersonal relationship conflicts and may be distressed in his social roles and relationships. The participant may be feeling stress/strain in his overall quality of life. Given the contextual and ecologically sound evidence it is logical to draw the conclusion that Lazarus's mental health and well-being has been, and remains negatively impacted by structural racism both broadly, as well as via the criminal justice system.

## **Conclusions**

*“Being locked up...It was, it wasn't a whole lot different than my life on the streets.” – Lazarus*

This portrait of Lazarus and his family's understandings and perceptions of their interactions with structural racism via the criminal justice system is but one account among the millions of U.S. born African families affected by structural racism via the criminal justice

system. The amount of incarcerated people in the United States is so high—driven in no small part by [U.S. born African] men incarcerated for many years, often for nonviolent drug offenses—that it requires no stretch of the imagination to recognize that structural racism in all of its forms must be confronted and that mass incarceration in the United States can be reasonably referred to as an epidemic, and its effects are pervasive. “Perhaps the two most striking qualities of mass incarceration are the rate at which it has accelerated in recent decades and the degree to which it disproportionately affects black men” (Galea, 2016).

The ecological framework aided in our examinations of the mental health dimensions of the complexities of lives and relationships impacted by structural racism via the criminal justice system. Through Lazarus, we are afforded a unique and underserved perspective on the structure and organization of the prison setting in contrast to the neighborhood and community settings of many low-SES, low education U.S. born African people since the 1970s. The U.S. penal systems continues to draw disproportionately from low-SES, low education U.S. born African communities. Wacquant, L. (2000), maintains that the prison literally functions as a surrogate ghetto, while the ghetto functions as a social prison. Both function as ideal environments for the maintenance of structural racism, or the oppressive and racialized status quo which hinders the social, economic, and political mobility of a disproportionate number of U.S. born African people through punitive controls (Kraska, Brent, 2011, 2004).

In accordance with person-environment fit theory, the subjective appraisals within these narratives indicate that there seem to be levels of stress-strain associated with navigating environments where resources do not necessarily meet ones needs. Lazarus’s mental health evaluation indicates that despite his phenomenal success upon release, he may have sustained considerable psychological injury, not only in his life, but due to physical and emotional abuse

during his incarceration. It is difficult to imagine that the violence and inhumane treatment he was subjected to while in state custody had no impact on his psychological and emotional well-being. The recent findings of mentally ill inmates having been tortured, driven to suicide, and killed by guards in Florida prisons is but one example in a sea of human rights violations committed by penal institutions in the U.S (Press, 2016). The human rights violations committed by state and federal penal institutions against inmates, who at the time of this research continue to be predominantly U.S. born African men, are a widespread yet little discussed (publicly) aspect of incarceration in the United States.

#### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

Chapter 4 presented analyses of the findings of the study, as a portrait of a formerly incarcerated U.S. born African man. The next chapter will conclude with some discussion of the findings, as well as their implications, and recommendation for future research.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, you will find a discussion of the findings, including their implications, and recommendation for future research.

### **5.2 Race, Structural Racism, Perception, and Reality**

“A society is not a collection of individuals, but a system of positions. To be a member of society is to occupy a prestructured social space and to find oneself already related to others in a certain manner. Since [one’s] relations with other positions are objectively structured in a determinate manner, so are [one’s] social experiences. Since [one’s] social experiences are

structured, [one's] forms of thought, the categories in terms of which [one] perceives and interprets the social world, are also structured. (Goldman, A.I., 1993).

In the U.S. racism as a construct remains the grid that the state and its subjects use to organize the experiences of life. Fanon (2008), reminds us that, "Every experience, especially if it turns out to be sterile, has to become a component of reality and consequently play a part in the restructuring of this reality.

I would argue that we have reached a point where racism functions structurally, as a background software (an unconscious model), always running in the background no longer so conscious, so visible, yet operating ceaselessly as the default sociopolitical, cultural, and economic framework of life in the U.S.

There is a certain taken-for-grantedness associated with the concepts of race and racism in the U.S. In the post-Obama age of "colorblindness, this taken-for-grantedness seems to be predominant, operative in various racial and socioeconomic groups. Yet, despite the nation's "sincere fictions, racial considerations shade almost everything in America. Blacks and dark-skinned racial minorities lag well behind whites in virtually every area of social life; they are about three times more likely to be poor than whites, earn over 40 percent less than whites, have an eighth of the net worth of whites, receive inferior educations, have less housing options, and still receive impolite treatment in stores, restaurants, and a host of other commercial transactions (Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

The apparent contradiction of racism's "invisibility" and its persistence lends itself to a host of scholarly inquiries. This study examined the contradictions within a racialized society and criminal justice system through the lenses of lived experience. Mills (1998) explains that, "experience does not come neatly in segments. While hegemonic groups characteristically have

experiences that foster illusory perceptions about society's functioning, subordinate groups characteristically have experiences that (at least potentially) give rise to more adequate conceptualizations (Mills, 1998).

In this age of professed "colorblindness" race is now popularly recast as a social construct, while simultaneously racism in the U.S. retains its structural integrity as a concept that has been constructed and reified into a reality. "Reality is a word in the English language which happens to be (a) a noun and (b) singular. Thinking in the English language (and in cognate Indo-European languages) therefore subliminally predisposes us to conceptualize "reality" as one block like entity, sort of like a huge New York skyscraper, in which every part is just another "room" within the same building. This linguistic program is so pervasive that most people cannot "think" outside it at all" (Wilson, 1995). Racism conceptualized as structural reflects its work as a noun, as a "building" with solidity, a world solid to the senses in which everyday life is experienced.

Scientists and philosophers have postulated that, reality itself is the world perceived by our senses, not "the real world" but a psychological and cognitive construct we create and reproduce. In the 1960s the reality of mental illness was questioned. Thomas S. Szasz (1960) contended that, "hardship for modern man, moreover, derives not so much from a struggle for biological survival as from the stresses and strains inherent in the social intercourse of complex human personalities. In this context, the notion of mental illness is used to identify or describe some feature of an individual's so-called personality. Mental illness -- as a deformity of the personality, so to speak -- is then regarded as the cause of the human disharmony. It is implicit in this view that social intercourse between people is regarded as something inherently harmonious, its disturbance being due solely to the presence of "mental illness" in many people. This is

obviously fallacious reasoning, for it makes the abstraction "mental illness" into a cause, even though this abstraction was created in the first place to serve only as a shorthand expression for certain types of human behavior. It now becomes necessary to ask: "What kinds of behavior are regarded as indicative of mental illness, and by whom?" While Szasz's contentions had obvious merit (he was especially accurate in his assertion regarding stress/strain being the result of social intercourse, as well as his elucidations regarding the sociohistorical roots of what is considered normal and abnormal human behavior and psychological functioning), he failed to conceptualize or theorize mental illness or threats to mental health and well-being beyond the realm of what may be considered "deviant behavior." While stigma is indeed "like beauty, in the eyes of the beholder (Byrne, 2000)," an individual's (indeed a society's) condition with regard to their cognitive, psychological and emotional comfort, happiness, or health (health in this case referring to a harmonious or balanced state) is of great consequence for a myriad of reasons.

Though the concepts of mental health and mental illness are complex, they remain vital to our existence. Conversely, social constructivist views regarding mental illness contribute much to the discourse. Some of Szasz's conclusions were especially interesting when analyzed through a critical race lens, his argument was that the notion of mental illness "had outlived whatever usefulness it might have had and that it now functions merely as a convenient myth. As such, it is a true heir to religious myths in general, and to the belief in witchcraft in particular; the role of all these belief-systems was to act as social tranquilizers, thus encouraging the hope that mastery of certain specific problems may be achieved by means of substitutive (symbolic-magical) operations. The notion of mental illness thus serves mainly to obscure the everyday fact that life for most people is a continuous struggle, not for biological survival, but for a "place in the sun," "peace of mind," or some other human value. For man aware of himself and of the

world about him, once the needs for preserving the body (and perhaps the race) are more or less satisfied, the problem arises as to what he should do with himself.” This study raises the question; What is there to be said and done about the awareness of the (U.S. born Africana) man who has not only failed thus far to secure and sustain the resources he needs for preserving his body, his race, and his peace of mind...his place in the sun, who is born into a social environment constructed in such a way that it impedes his ability to do so, What is he to do with himself?

While P-E fit theory can yield four types of correspondence between person and environment; objective P-E fit, subjective P-E fit, contact with reality, and accuracy of self-assessment, it is the interaction between these correspondences, via the perception and lived experiences of the individual, that becomes most critical to mental health and well-being (Caplan, 1987). Theoretically, these considerations have implications for moving toward research on the intersections of psychology, cognition, culture, and race. In what ways might the “suffocating reification” (Fanon, 2008) of structural racism impact the identity development and subsequent behaviors of U.S. born Africana men like Lazarus?

Viewing racism as structural brings its pervasiveness into focus. Racism as structural is not limited to the realm of individual thought or behavior, nor is it limited to institutional or organizational structure and behavior, in contrast, structural racism encompasses all of these realms and others because it is a sociohistorical construction that is intimately linked with the basic processes and assumptions of U.S. society. Structural racism impacts all aspects of U.S. born Africana life. From this broader more contextual (and constructivist) lens the relationship between structural racism and capitalism becomes clearer. The formative link between enslaved Africana people, free labor, and capitalist accumulation is well documented, as are the economic

inequalities, challenges, and hardships associated with being identified as a U.S. born African person, particularly of lower SES and lower education levels. As previously mentioned, enterprise culture is the logical extension of capitalism. It makes logical sense that regardless of one's race, SES or educational levels, being born and raised within a capitalist structure where enterprise culture is the norm (even celebrated) pushes individuals to make as much profit as possible, by any means necessary. Lazarus, and many men like him, are neither innocent victims nor are they explicitly villains. They may be more accurately understood as products of the broader cultural environment and social structure. One of the challenges for U.S. born African men like Lazarus, is that their race classification makes them significantly more vulnerable to criminal justice sanctions that have the potential to impact their lives, as well as the lives of their families, more negatively than any other group in U.S. society.

“Western science began with Galileo's demonstration that color is not "in" objects but "in" the interaction of our senses with objects. Despite this philosophic and scientific knowledge of neurological relativity, we still, due to language, think that behind the flowing, meandering, interacting, evolving universe created by perception is one solid monolithic "reality" hard and crisply outlined as an iron bar” (Wilson, 1995). If we indeed view reality itself in this way, then the declaration that race, and by extension structural racism is a mere social construct may be viewed in a more urgent light, one that illuminates the continued (and very real) devaluation of humanity which emerges from a dehumanizing social ontology, a way of organizing experience that promotes the domination of those people considered White and the subordination of those people considered Black, because it is on these general terms which the ongoing conflict over wealth, political influence, and resources is waged. This research represents but a snapshot of this invisible war. Perhaps future research will allow for the longitudinal study and compilation

of many narratives, diverse portraits of individuals, families, and communities impacted by this ongoing conflict.

### 5.3 Race and Criminality

“The conflation of black man and criminal is an image which is alive and well in our collective psyche. “It may be more important to understand the images of crime conveyed by a society than the actual dynamics of crime” (Scheingold, 1984). Lazarus shared that:

*“Because I’m an ex con. I don’t care if you black or white. It’s still that stigma, I’m an ex con. still a nigger, you know, no matter how many degrees you got, no matter how much experience that you still have, even to some black people you still a nigger. So, what I mean is that if these people think that I am still this image, this person, that I am, I’m not a human being, but I’m an ex con. I’m a misprint, you know what I’m saying. I’m a criminal, but I’m not a human being”*  
– Lazarus

Even years after his release from prison, Lazarus still struggles with the inner turmoil and dual social stigma of his race, his blackness and a perceived criminality. “The racial stereotyping of criminals has been an enduring and unfortunate feature of American culture. However, following the civil rights movement, the linkage between Blacks and crime was galvanized. The stereotyping of Blacks as criminals is so pervasive throughout [U.S.] society that “criminal predator” is used as a euphemism for “young Black male.” This common stereotype has erroneously served as a subtle rationale for the unofficial policy and practice of racial profiling by criminal justice practitioners (Welch, 2007).

The Criminal Blackman has been constructed and reinforced as kind of social-psychological heuristic, a rule not an exception regarding U.S. born African boys and men. All too often, if we think criminal, we think black people. There are aspects of black culture itself that are synonymous with criminality, we see this reflected to us in various forms of media. The criminal as part of black identity is an aspect of the dehumanization made possible by structural racism. It facilitates the killing of U.S. born African children like 12 year old, Tamir Rice, who was gunned down by police in front of the Cudell Recreation Center, in Cleveland, Ohio on November, 22nd 2014.

#### **5.4 The invisible War Made Visible**

The misfit between person and environment can be seen as representative of the inner (psychological) conflict linked with the outer conflict (lack of resources in the environment brought on by structural racism. “The researchers who have studied stress and its psychological and health effects have typically not focused on the health-related impact of race or racism” (Carter, 2007).

This study has implications for the further development of the discipline of psychology. The narratives within it call for the expansion of conceptualizations of mental health, and mental well-being based on more culturally pluralistic models in order to move toward more innovative healing and solutions. The subfields of community psychology, ecopsychology and liberation psychology are taking steps in this direction.

The stress and strain of experiencing structural racism broadly, and via the criminal justice system specifically, remain underserved dimensions of mental health. “Issues of severe stress are

usually assessed according to DSM–IV–TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Currently, race-based experiences are not considered within the domain of the DSM–IV–TR or in regard to severe stress reactions. The DSM–IV–TR criteria for assessing trauma are limited to life threats and physically dangerous events, which dramatically limits the types of events that can cause stress-related disorders (Carter, 2007).

The concept of mental health must be expanded to include considerations of race, culture and the ways that we perceive ourselves and our environments. Mental health might be more usefully conceived of as mental well-being, or as part of a more holistic and ecologically sound model of the human mind, one that synthesizes the dimensions of family, and community. Perhaps an accurate measure of our mental well-being would be the degree to which we nurture our environments and make them desirable places to grow in and be a part of, as well as how we express love and empower ourselves as well as one another.

The definition of violence provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) states that violence is “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal- development or deprivation.” However, as Tyner (2016) inquires, “What if for the moment, we consider violence to be any action (or inaction) that results in injury, maldevelopment, or death? In other words, what if we move beyond an individually oriented and biologically premised understanding of violence to consider how certain policies, practices, and programs may have the same consequences for human survivability?” How might this redefinition of the problem of violence impact our conceptualizations of and subsequent solutions to its state sanctioned forms in use within U.S. society, where the racialized social structure results in the differential valuation of human life?

Section 1 of the thirteenth amendment reads; “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted**, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” The wording of the amendment can be instructive in discourse regarding structural racism broadly as well as structural racism via the criminal justice system. The amendment allows for slavery to exist as “a punishment for crime.” In keeping with the history of criminalizing race, culture, and behavior as well as enabling police to arrest poor freedmen and force them to work for the state under convict leasing; the suppression of U.S. born African people through myriad disenfranchisements, lynchings and Jim Crow; the war on drugs and, its resultant mass incarceration of Latinos and U.S. born African peoples, It provides an avenue for the continuation of the legacy of slavery, the very foundation of capitalism in the U.S.

As this draft goes out for editing, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, has reversed Obama-era guidelines for how to deal with drug offenders, directing federal prosecutors to charge defendants with the "most serious, readily provable" offense in nearly all cases. Sessions said in a speech that day that the new guidelines "un-handcuffed" prosecutors in their law enforcement efforts and is "the right and moral thing to do." His words echo the legal-rational theoretical orientation toward criminal justice activity that catalyzed and formed the foundation for the “war on drugs” and the subsequent age of incarceration that have destroyed millions of U.S. born African lives, and have been derided by countless scholars in various disciplines. Senator Rand Paul said mandatory minimums have “a racially disparate impact, and that Sessions' policy shift would "accentuate" that "injustice” (Patterson, 2017). Sessions’ mandate is a move towards the further entrenchment of an already massive racialized carceral state. It stands to revive the “law and order” rhetoric that Michelle Alexander, and other scholars have shown to be a coded mantra

for the reestablishment of racial domination. More than a policy mandate, Sessions' words are a war cry, a deepening of the lines already drawn defining The Invisible War.

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## **APPENDICIES**

### **Appendix A Consent Forms**

#### **CONSENT FORM**

Georgia State University  
African American Studies  
Informed Consent

The Invisible War: A Case Study of Structural Racism and Stress in the Lived Experiences of a Formerly Incarcerated U.S. born African man

Principal Investigator.

Tarell C. Kyles

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the complexities of life and relationships impacted by the structural racism of the criminal justice system. More specifically we would like to examine the times, places, and interactions in your life (especially those involving the criminal justice system) that have caused experiences of stress/strain. You are invited to participate because you identify as a formerly incarcerated Black/African American adult between the ages of 30-50. Participation will require up to 2 hours and 15 minutes of your time.

II. Procedures:

If you choose to participate then in conjunction with Sandra Barnhill, and the PI, you will have the opportunity to schedule times and sites of data collection. Times, dates, and locations will be scheduled to ensure the most convenient and comfortable experiences for you.

This study requires three separate thirty-minute life history interviews containing open-ended questions about your life history while focusing on your experiences and perceptions of, as well as your interactions with the criminal justice system. Following the life history interviews, the PI will ask the participant's permission to speak with other family members regarding his life. These limited interviews with the participant's adult family members will be used to map the principal participant's social life. These interviews will be shorter and utilize a slightly modified version of the first set of interview questions. These modified questions will be designed to obtain the family members' experiences and perceptions of some of the major life events detailed by their formerly incarcerated male family member, focusing primarily on the impact of incarceration on relationships.

There will be a forty-five-minute observational period of naturalistic inquiry, in which the PI will observe the participant in a familial or community setting, to be determined during the entrance (introductory) meeting.

During the periods of fieldwork, the PI will view relevant documents, archival records, and possibly physical artifacts that may deepen the analysis. The PI, will also collect field data from a prison trip in which I will study the basic environmental surroundings and organizational activity of a correctional facility. Field notes will take the form of a research diary designed to aid in the promotion of reflexivity in the research process.

The data from all observational periods will be compiled along with any relevant records and personal additions the respondents may want to include in order to deepen the context of the final portraiture.

An exit meeting will be scheduled with the respondents, the PI, and Sandra Barnhill, in which respondents will be able to reflect on their experiences in the study and compensation

will be provided in the form of ten-dollar gift cards. No names will be used in the study; therefore, you will remain anonymous.

### III. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. However, in the event that any psychological distress is caused by the recalling of any negative experiences, the PI retains referrals for professional mental health services to assist participants with any challenges they may face in the context of the study.

### IV. Benefits

In this, study, we hope to obtain information that will lead to a greater understanding of the mental health impacts of structural racism via the criminal justice system on U.S. born African men and their families, as well as how U.S. born African men and their families perceive the mental health impacts of their experiences with structural racism via the criminal justice system. In short, your voice matters. One of the goals of this research is to amplify the voices of those who are disproportionately affected by racial injustice and inequality.

By participating in this study, it is our intent that you will become empowered by discussing your experiences within the context of this research. The finalized portraiture will deepen and expand the discussion of structural racism via the criminal justice system, as well as increase the support for and expansion of Forever Family, and organizations like it, who work to provide community level solutions to these challenges. You will be contributing to the overall betterment of society, including but not limited to black communities, by providing honest data that sheds light on the lived experiences of structural racism and inequality.

### V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to withdraw at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time without any loss or penalty.

### VI. Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Information may be seen by those who maintain research standards such as the GSU Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP). No names will be used. The information you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet. Your name and other facts that might point to you will NOT appear when this study is presented. The findings will be summarized and reported using aliases. You will NOT be identified personally.

### VII. Contact Persons

Tarell Kyles @ 678-300-6521

Email: [tkyles1@student.gsu.edu](mailto:tkyles1@student.gsu.edu)

Please direct inquiries regarding this study directly to the researcher.

Please direct questions and concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study to Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513

Email: [svogtner@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner@gsu.edu)

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject

You will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

X

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Participant

X

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Researcher Obtaining Consent

## **Appendix B Social Life Maps**

### **Fig. 1 SELF, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY BEFORE INCARCERATION**

Lazarus was born in Indianapolis in the 1970s, around the same time that the U.S. prison and jail population began to swell, due in large part to the burgeoning war on drugs. “In the 1970s, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology allowed scientists to view adolescents’ brain development. MRI images of adolescents’ brains made clear that they undergo enormous

changes in areas of the brain that shape the adolescent's world-view, morality, and judgment. The adolescent brain undergoes a massive remodeling of its basic structure, in areas that affect everything from logic and language to impulses and intuition" (Sacks, 2010).

Regarding this psychologically impressionable period in his life history, Lazarus recalled his primary behavioral models as well as various race related experiences which became turning points for him. Lazarus and his younger brother were not close due to their differences in worldview and their mother influencing the ways in which the little brother viewed the father...Lazarus and his sister were close though, her mother (who his sister identified as a successful hustler and stepmother to Lazarus as well as one of his father's "outside families") helped raise Lazarus in the projects with them. His nephew grew up idolizing him. His friends became his fellow criminal peers. In this period Lazarus begins identifying heavily with enterprise culture. We see his community environment contrasted with his primary behavioral models, influencing his worldview and his behavior. His father dying served as a psycho-emotional turning point in which he recalls becoming more selfish. Moving more seriously into criminal activities, and eventually elevating his status in the unsanctioned economy until he becomes a millionaire. Lazarus courts and gets engaged to a woman, but his arrest immediately impacted his inner life as well as all his social relationships.



Figure 1

## Fig. 2 SELF, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY DURING INCARCERATION

The violence and punishment inflicted upon Lazarus during his incarceration likely had deleterious effects on his psychological well-being. His social location at the intersection of race, age, and gender facilitated his unique experience in this life history period. The inhumanity of solitary confinement, diesel therapy and the violence of the SPORT Team, contrasted with Lazarus's positive transformation via culturally centered education (collective and self-education). His relationship with his mother seemed to be strengthened while his relationship with his brother got worse. His relationship with The Misses ended due to emotional and financial stress/strain. Lazarus's nephew took his place within the drug economy.



Figure 2

### Fig. 3 SELF, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY AFTER INCARCERATION

Lazarus was changed, he saw himself and his community, even the world differently. Compare and contrast Lazarus's before and after incarceration self-appraisals. He reported that his consistent reading and comprehension of Africana-centered, culturally relevant literature changed his view of himself, leading to a reconciled relationship with his brother, mother and nephew, as well as a renewed healthier relationship with his sister.

Despite the positive changes Lazarus made, his OQ-45.2 scores indicate the he may be suffering mental health issues perhaps as a result of both his pre-incarceration environments and experiences as well as the experiences and environments during his direct contact with the criminal justice system, specifically the penal institutions.



Figure 3