2023

Justice-Impacted Black Males' Perceptions of How Life Skills Coaching Helped Overcome Barriers to Housing, Healthcare, and Employment

Isreal W. Moses IV
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Justice-Impacted Black Males' Perceptions of How Life Skills Coaching Helped

Overcome Barriers to Housing, Healthcare, and Employment

By

Isreal W. Moses IV

This Dissertation is Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for

the Educational Doctorate Degree

in Educational Leadership

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

November 2023

Friday, November 10, 2023

Justice-Impacted Black Males' Perceptions of How Life Skills Coaching Helped

Overcome Barriers to Housing, Healthcare, and Employment

Isreal W. Moses IV

This dissertation has been examined and approved by the following members of the

student's committee:

_____

Dr. Melissa Krull, Advisor

_____

Dr. Natalie Rasmussen, Committee Member

_____

Dr. Marcellus Davis, Committee Member

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my family, Kyra my loving wife, and children Isreal, Laila, and Harper for their support and encouragement as they cleared the path for me to achieve my dream. I would like to acknowledge my mother, who told me when I was in grade school that I could do and be anything I wanted if I applied myself. I am grateful to those who have come before me and allowed me to stand on their shoulders to achieve this important accomplishment. I appreciate the wisdom and sacrifice my ancestors endured, without it, my experience would not be the same.

Thank you to each faculty member in my program for your dedication to nurturing my development as a researcher, academic writer, critical race theorist, and advocate for racial equity. Special thanks go to my advisor, Dr. Melissa Krull, whose encouragement, mentorship, and persistence helped me continue to move forward through a global pandemic and changes in my professional career. I am appreciative of her advice and wisdom. I am grateful to my committee members, Dr. Natalie Rasmussen and Dr. Marcellus Davis, for their mentorship, guidance, and critical reflection. Thank you so much, Dr. Antonia Felix. Your support and belief in my work is greatly appreciated.

Finally, I extend my thanks to the participants in the study. Taking the time out of their hectic lives to share their beliefs, feelings, and lived experiences is a testament to their desire to contribute in a meaningful way to make the world a better place to live. I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude for everyone who played a role in this research process. I will forever be thankful for your investment in this scholarship.

Table of Contents

JUSTICE-IMPACTED BLACK MALES' PERCEPTION OF HOW LIFE SKILLS

COACHING HELPED OVERCOME BARRIERS TO HOUSING,

HEALTHCARE, AND EMPLOYMENT

Isreal W. Moses IV

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

EDUCATIONAL DOCTORATE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO, MN
OCTOBER 2023

ABSTRACT

This study examined the beliefs, perceptions, and lived experiences of justice-impacted Black males and focused on the impact of life skills coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable housing, healthcare, and employment. The study affirmed the important role life skills coaching played in the sustainable success of justice-impacted Black males. Through in-depth analysis, the study uncovered multi-leveled themes related to the effects of life skills coaching. The results revealed one overarching theme related to the broad barrier of having a criminal record. There were also three effects that resulted from this barrier: Having a Record, Mindset, and Low Self-Confidence. The three broad themes in participants' responses were: Coach as an Informational Source, Adopting New Perspectives, and Skills Improvement. This research contributed valuable insights into the positive influence of life skills coaching on justice-impacted Black males, offering a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contributed to their sustainable success.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background of the Problem

This qualitative phenomenological research study addressed the effects of life skills coaching among justice-impacted Black males in the United States of America. The disproportionality of Black males incarcerated in the USA is a staggering figure. According to the United States Census Bureau (2020), almost 19 million Black males reside in the U.S. Of those Black males, a disproportionate number are incarcerated in jails and prisons. Black males make up roughly 13% of the total population but represent almost 40% of incarcerated individuals (The Sentencing Project, 2022). If not addressed, this issue continues to have a highly adverse impact on the quality of life for the entire Black community. In 2017, approximately 526,000 Black males were housed in state or federal prisons, and another 219,660 were housed in local jails. These numbers represented the lives of more than the total prison populations of multiple countries worldwide, including Argentina, Canada, England, and India combined (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017).

If previously stated current trends continued, one out of every nine Black males could expect to have experienced incarceration during their lifetime or, in some cases, to have spent the rest of their life incarcerated (Merlo & Wolpin, 2015). Looking closer at the trend plaguing Black males, it was apparent that heading to prison started young for them. Before they were 20, Black males were more likely to have been arrested than all other age groups for this demographic (Merlo & Wolpin). By age 23, almost 50% of Black males had experienced being detained by the local police authorities (Brame et al.,

2014; Merlo & Wolpin). These alarming statistics were exacerbated by the state laws of mandatory minimum sentencing, zero-tolerance policies, the three-strikes ruling, and the now-defunct War on Drugs policy. To further explain and define, the zero-tolerance policy gives a predetermined punishment to every person who commits a crime or breaks a rule regardless of individual culpability, extenuating circumstances, or history (U.S. Legal, Inc, Definitions, n.d.). Furthermore, the three-strikes ruling calls for mandatory life imprisonment if a justice-impacted individual: (1) has been found guilty in federal court of a "serious violent felony" and (2) has been found guilty previously two or more times in federal or state courts, at least one of which is a severe violent felony and the other offense may be a serious drug offense (Manning, 2018, p. 217). Finally, the now-defunct War on Drugs policy was the effort by the federal government in the United States since the 1970s to combat illegal drug use by greatly increasing penalties, enforcement, and incarceration for drug offenders (Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, n.d.). These actions and other societal ills have significantly increased the Black male incarceration percentages (Bronson & Carson, 2019).

There were many adverse outcomes associated with the disenfranchisement of incarcerated Black males. Some examples of the negative consequences of extended periods of incarceration were feelings of isolation and loneliness, arrested development of cognitive and behavioral skills, and decreased communal experiences (Vil, 2019). The effects of extended periods of incarceration were not siloed to the incarcerated individual. The family unit and other connected individuals experienced traumatizing effects from the absence of the justice-impacted individual. Fathers played a critical role in the family unit, and incarceration removed the opportunity to develop and foster personal

relationships. Data showed that over 90% of all incarcerated Black men, 12% between the ages of 25 and 29, were fathers and struggled to establish and maintain close, meaningful, and personal relationships with their children (American Academy of Earth and Sciences, 2022). Without fostering meaningful relationships, other negative interactions became more prevalent during incarceration. Negative interactions while incarcerated were not germane to justice-impacted Black males; however, they were more susceptible to violent crimes such as drug use, gang violence, and assault with weapons such as shanks and knives (Bell, 2017).

Of the .7 million Black males incarcerated, 95% were released back into society without having developed skill sets that allowed for productive citizenship (Lacity et al., 2016). After justice-impacted Black males were released into communities, they had fractured relationships; they faced numerous social, emotional, and economic challenges resulting in behavior that could trigger further interactions with the justice system. Individuals who had served time for violent or non-violent crimes were often perceived as violent and harmful. This perception often created isolation and tension between them and their family members (Wright, 1991). Furthermore, justice-impacted individuals were often discriminated against in housing and employment (Evans et al., 2019; Furst & Evans, 2016; Leasusre & Martin, 2017; Oliver, 2017). Some states revoked the driver's licenses of justice-impacted individuals, causing a negative ripple effect on their opportunities for a successful transition back into their community (Zhang, 2018). In 48 states, justice-impacted individuals convicted of felonies were not permitted to exercise the right to vote. Not being able to vote prohibited their active participation in the

democratic process and removed the impact of a large, influential population (Poama & Theuns, 2019).

The isolation and lack of inclusion persisted as challenges for justice-impacted Black males in the realm of employment. They continued to encounter discouragement when seeking careers in fields that required contact with children, health service occupations, security, and law (Zhang, 2018). For many justice-impacted individuals who had spent an extended period of time incarcerated, acquiring education or developing vocational and technological skills necessary for competing in the contemporary job market remained a challenge, rendering them dependent on alternative sources of income (Oliver, 2017). In some states, written policies persisted that allowed for the denial of employment to justice-impacted individuals, particularly those with felonies once background checks had been conducted (Zhang).

In states where procedures permitted the hiring of justice-impacted individuals, employers often remained hesitant to hire individuals with criminal history backgrounds, further exacerbating economic instability (Flake, 2014). Despite what might appear to be a substantial amount of resources intended for justice-impacted individuals, the barriers to their successful employment persisted.

Black men who had been impacted by the justice system, coupled with chronic unemployment, economic and housing instability, and the lack of healthcare or supportive relationships, often led to criminal behaviors and recidivism (Anderson et al., 2018). In comparison, they had received far fewer support and resources. Individuals not impacted by the justice system had been able to access essential services like food, housing, and healthcare through programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development

(HUD); however, some justice-impacted individuals had not been allowed to participate

in governmental assistance programs (Ollove, 2013).

These barriers to accessing crucial resources and services created a cycle of

disadvantages that persisted even after individuals had served their sentences and

reentered society. The lack of support for justice-impacted individuals in healthcare,

housing, and economic stability remained a significant challenge.

Recidivism refers to criminal acts that led people to be re-arrested, re-convicted,

and re-incarcerated within a certain period after their release from prison (Anderson et

al., 2018). Simply put, recidivism was the return of individuals to prison or jail because

they had violated the rules of probation or parole or had received new charges (Zgoba &

Dayal, 2015). This proverbial merry-go-round of freedom has contributed to one of the

highest recidivism rates globally (Alper et al., 2018).

The cycle of recidivism remains a pressing concern, indicating the challenges

faced by justice-impacted individuals in breaking free from the criminal justice system's

revolving door. Despite efforts to address this issue, it persisted as a significant obstacle

in the reintegration of individuals into society after their involvement with the justice

system.

The analysis of recidivism data opened a lens to a severe problem within the

justice system's re-entry programs. The data reported by Alper et al. (2018) from the

United States Bureau of Justice Statistics indicated that, without regard to gender, age, or

race, most people had returned to jail or prison within the first three years of their release.

About 82% of all justice-impacted individuals had been arrested within the first year of

their release from prison, and over three years, 34% had been charged and arrested. When

recidivism rates were analyzed by gender, males were 22% more likely to recidivate than

women. Justice-impacted individuals aged 21 years and younger exhibited the highest

recidivism rate at 90%, followed by males aged 25 to 29 at 87%. Notably, Black males

had the highest recidivism rate (Alper et al.). The national recidivism rate for Black males

had been high at 73%.

Breaking down the causes of recidivism, about 44% were attributed to property

crimes, which included offenses aimed at obtaining money or property, such as burglary,

theft, vandalism, and arson (National Institute of Justice, 2021), and 6% were due to

violent crimes. Another 11% were related to drug crimes, and 5% to sex crimes.

Furthermore, approximately 64% of Black males who had committed a crime after being

released from prison had been unemployed (Alper et al., 2018).

This data depicts the urgent need for more effective reentry programs and support

systems for justice-impacted individuals, particularly those at higher risk of recidivism

such as Black males.

Recidivism in Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (2018) defined recidivism as behaviors

that lead to one or multiple consequences: re-arrest, reconviction, reincarceration for a

new sentence, or supervision revocation for a technical violation. McNeely (2018)

reported that 45% of justice-impacted individuals were rearrested for a felony within

three years of their release. Furthermore, approximately 28% had recidivated due to new

offenses, and an additional 12% for technical violations of the terms of their supervised

release (McNeely).

These statistics revealed the persistent challenges faced by justice-impacted individuals in avoiding further involvement with the criminal justice system after their initial release. Addressing recidivism remained a crucial aspect of re-entry programs and support services for this population, emphasizing the need for effective interventions to break the cycle of repeated incarceration.

The Minnesota Department of Human Resources (2018) data showed that Black males living in Minnesota had the highest recidivism rate compared to all other defined ethnic groups. The recidivism rate for Black males in Minnesota had been 70%, whereas their White counterparts had a rate of 49%. Additionally, 59% of Black males who had recidivated within three years of their release had not obtained a high school diploma, significantly hindering their employment opportunities. The overrepresentation of Black males in national and state recidivism rates was attributed to their higher likelihood of returning to urban neighborhoods characterized by poverty, unemployment, and crime.

The data below showed the favorable outcomes of interventions in reducing recidivism. Justice-impacted individuals who participated in a single successful recidivism-reduction intervention program decreased the likelihood of recurrence by 12%, while participation in two effective programs further reduced recidivism by 26%. These results showed the importance of implementing impactful interventions to facilitate the reintegration of justice-impacted individuals into society and disrupt the cycle of repeated incarceration.

According to the Minnesota Department of Justice (MNDOJ 2021), statewide recidivism decreased by 14 percentage points for justice-impacted individuals who had completed re-entry programs. These individuals exhibited a lower likelihood of

recidivating. In contrast, incarceration without participation in any programming increased the odds of recidivism by 13%. Therefore, the critical analysis of factors that reduce recidivism is imperative for justice-impacted individuals.

These findings show the significant impact of re-entry programs in reducing recidivism rates and the importance of continued support and investment in such programming to facilitate the successful re-entry of justice-impacted individuals into communities they chose.

Employment and Recidivism

Providing employment resources was critical in establishing a foundation for justice-impacted individuals to return to their communities after incarceration. It was identified as one of the most influential factors impacting recidivism (Ramakers et al., 2016). Justice-impacted individuals who had stable employment were three times less likely to recidivate than their unemployed counterparts (Flake, 2014). However, initially securing employment upon release proved to be a formidable challenge.

Multiple barriers hindered justice-impacted individuals from finding employment. Some of these barriers were associated with a lack of education, skills, and felony status, while others were related to employer's reluctance to hire justice-impacted individuals due to perceived risk factors (Engel et al., 2016). The Fair Credit Reporting Act, state laws, and federal court rulings granted employers the right to conduct background checks on potential employees. It had become common practice for employers to require applicants to undergo various personal examinations as part of the hiring process, including criminal background checks, credit history checks, character references, and fingerprinting, all influencing hiring decisions (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2016). Von

Bergen and Bressler reported that over 70% of employers required at least a criminal background check before considering hiring an employee. In such cases, justice-impacted individuals were often judged based on their criminal history rather than their abilities. Some employers were unwilling to investigate whether an individual's arrest record had resulted in a conviction or to evaluate the nature of their past criminal activity.

These barriers compounded the challenges justice-impacted individuals faced when seeking employment, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support and changes in hiring practices to improve their sustained success with re-entry.

The statistics published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) indicated that the unemployment rate for Black men aged 25 and older was higher than that of their peers from other ethnic backgrounds. The unemployment rate for Asian males in the same age group was 2.3%, while it was 3.2% for Hispanic and Latino males and 3.3% for White males. In stark contrast, the unemployment rate for Black males stood at 5.4%. Finding employment was challenging for Black men before they became justice-impacted, and justice-impacted individuals were three times more likely to be reincarcerated without stable employment.

Employers' attitudes towards justice-impacted individuals varied and depended on the nature of the business and the position to be filled (Griffith & Young, 2017). While some employers might have understood justice-impacted individuals' challenges in securing employment and were willing to provide second-chance opportunities, their company policies often disqualified those with felony convictions. Additionally, justice-impacted individuals were sometimes offered lower wages than their non-justice-impacted peers (Griffith & Young).

Employing justice-impacted individuals in positions requiring communication with customers, handling cash, or expensive merchandise increased the organization's risk and could result in legal ramifications under negligent hiring laws. Under lax hiring laws, employers could be held liable for the criminal actions of their employees and could be sued for punitive damages or loss of property (Griffith & Young). Lawsuits resulting from negligent hiring practices have been costly for employers, with employees winning 72% of the cases settled for such practices, with an average payout of $1.6 million per case. Employers also received constant negative feedback from the media and portrayals in movies about justice-impacted individuals, influencing their hiring decisions (Staff, 2016).

The economic consequences of failing to provide justice-impacted individuals with employment were substantial. The American economy incurred an $80 billion expense annually for factors such as unemployment and education programs for justice-impacted individuals (Bucknor & Barber, 2016). Educational opportunities were pivotal to the success of justice-impacted individuals, there was a direct correlation between education and wages. According to Bucknor & Barber, 55% of justice-impacted individuals earned more than the federal minimum wage after participating in educational opportunities. They also experienced higher rates of divorce and lower marriage rates, estimated to reduce economic growth by $26.7 billion and increase child welfare costs by $5.3 billion (Hopkins, 2018).

Historically, attempts have been made to address the need to remove barriers to success for justice-impacted individuals. In 1996, the United States Department of Labor adopted the Federal Bonding Program, which was designed to minimize employers'

concerns about hiring justice-impacted individuals concerning property damage and theft (Petersen, 2015). The program was structured for the federal government to issue bonds of up to $25,000 in $5,000 increments to employers, with the bonds provided at no cost to the employer during the first six months (Hillyer, 2015). The Work Opportunities Tax Credit was also created for employers in the private sector who hired justice-impacted individuals. Employers could claim $9,600 per employee, and there was no limit to the number of justice-impacted employees an employer could hire. To be eligible for the tax credit, an employer needed to hire individuals with felony convictions in their background and employ them for a minimum of 120 hours, with eligibility contingent on the hiring date being less than one year from the individual's prison release date. After completing a minimum of 120 hours, the employer could claim a tax credit equal to 25% of the individual's income, with the maximum amount being $1,500.77. If the individual worked 400 or more hours, the employer could claim a tax credit equal to 40% of the employee's first year's wages, up to the maximum amount of $2,400 (Hillyer, 2016).

Despite the adoption of these federal laws aimed at reducing the burden on employers when hiring justice-impacted individuals, many remained reluctant to do so. However, for justice-impacted individuals to gain employment, potential employers needed to become more willing to consider this demographic for employment. The lack of work presented a significant barrier to accessing affordable housing.

Housing and Recidivism

Leasure and Martin (2017) asserted that access to affordable housing was one of the most significant barriers to the successful reentry of justice-impacted individuals into society. Once housing was attained, they were generally located in unsafe areas. Most

states had policies that did not permit justice-impacted individuals who had sold drugs or been involved in sex crimes to live in public housing (Leasure & Martin). These same policies empowered private housing markets to deny homes or apartments to justice-impacted individuals (Robertson & Hayden, 2018).

Kirk et al. (2018) contended that one-third of all Americans, or about 34 million, were renters in their current housing establishment. The researchers also noted that landlords benefited economically from creating desirable neighborhoods and dealing with social perceptions about potential renters. Like employers, landlords heavily relied on criminal background checks to determine a person's likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior. A problem with this dependence on background checks was that they did not differentiate between individuals who had served time for a violent or non-violent crime. Moreover, violent crimes constituted a small percentage of all criminal arrests. Of the 150,511 total arrests made in 2017, only 7% were for violence, and the background checks did not indicate whether individuals were convicted. Consequently, landlords had the liberty to deny housing to individuals with a criminal past. With current policies, over-reliance on background checks as a determining factor, and negative perceptions, justice-impacted individuals significantly obtained housing less frequently and were more likely to recidivate (Kirk et al.).

Harding et al. (2017) noted that justice-impacted individuals tended to reside in familiar environments where they had family and social ties once released from prison. Unfortunately, these familiar everyday environments were often the same neighborhoods that presented justice-impacted individuals with criminal opportunities and peers that initially led them to be incarcerated. The statistics showed that one-third of justice-

impacted individuals were rearrested within half a mile of their previous residence. When the distance was increased to five miles, the percentage soared to sixty percent (Kirk et al., 2018). While some research evidence supports that housing impacted recidivism, it may have been necessary to separate justice-impacted individuals from environments and individuals associated with their previous criminal behavior. However, finding housing was not a simple task for individuals with a criminal past.

Better Futures Minnesota

Information on the Better Futures Minnesota website stated that the organization supported men with significant barriers to stabilization and self-sufficiency, including chronic poverty, unemployment, incarceration, untreated mental illness, addiction, homelessness, and dependence on public assistance. Better Futures Minnesota (2020) reported that its model consisted of four fundamental components for sustainable success: stable housing, health and wellness engagement, workforce development, and life-skills coaching. In the first 21 days, each participant was engaged and supported in health and wellness programming, receiving a dental cleaning and examination, vision screening, behavioral and chemical health assessments, and assigned a life skills coach (Better Futures Minnesota, 2020).

Participants in the Better Futures model lived in community suites for six to eight months to connect them to the critical support they needed, including mental health and life skills coaching, and to help them establish a rental history for building their success story. Initially, all participants resided in the Community Suites, similar to a dorm-style setting, which allowed them to continue their personal development by abiding by Better Futures Minnesota's rules and their assigned release conditions, remaining sober, and

adhering to curfew. This arrangement has led to 100% of the participants securing permanent housing upon their release from prison.

Better Futures Minnesota forged beneficial partnerships with Hennepin Health, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, and MNsure to tackle mental and physical health needs of the participants. Better Futures Minnesota reported that 70% of the participants experience depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly known as co-occurring disorders. These challenges generate barriers to sustainable success.

Better Futures Minnesota utilized the on-the-job training model during the first six months participants were engaged in their model. While participating in on-the-job training, participants could earn industry-standard certifications that helped create a path to sustainable employment and self-sufficiency. Better Futures Minnesota had multiple lines of business, including deconstruction, warehouse safety, appliance recycling, janitorial services, and snow and lawn care equipment training and maintenance. All participants were required to rotate through their business lines to ensure they received employment opportunities.

The organization provided round-the-clock life skills coaching centered on compassionate accountability. This approach aimed to cultivate healthy, tension-free relationships between life skills coaches and participants. The coaching methods ranged from informal, face-to-face interactions to more intensive case management sessions, all designed to support and guide individuals towards positive growth and development (Better Futures Minnesota, 2020).

Better Futures Minnesota's life skills coaches are chosen to reflect the population they serve and promote a culturally sensitive environment. With the exception of one

white male, all the life skills coaches identify as people of color within the Black community. One tool the life skills coaches use to facilitate the transformation of the participants is curriculum for the three-week academy. The curriculum is culturally sensitive with embedded race-related topics for discussion. It is imperative for ensuring the educational material addresses nuances that impact diverse populations fostering a more equitable learning experience.

Life-skill coaching was an intervention used to help individuals deal with challenges they faced upon release from prison and bridge the gap between where they were at the time and where they wanted to be (Schinkel & Whyte, 2012). Justice-impacted individuals who participated in life skills coaching, including learning skills to deal with environmental situations, empowered both coaches and participants to positively impact the likelihood of recidivism (Smyth, 2014). Better Futures Minnesota has served over 1,200 men since it first introduced its model in 2007 in the Minneapolis metropolitan area (Better Futures Minnesota, 2020). Participants for this study were selected from Better Futures Minnesota because they were easily accessible to the researcher, who had formerly been employed as a leader within the organization.

Purpose Statement

The study investigated the participants' perceptions of how life skills coaching impacted their ability to overcome affordable housing, healthcare, and employment barriers. It looked into their experiences and how life skills coaching had contributed to addressing these challenges.

Research Questions

The primary research question and three sub-questions guided this study. The overarching question was, "What were the effects of life coaching for formerly incarcerated Black male participants in overcoming barriers to affordable housing, affordable healthcare, and employment?" The study explored this central question and three sub-questions in depth to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of life coaching on these individuals.

1. How did participants describe the impact of life coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable housing?

2. How did participants describe the impact of life coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable healthcare?

3. How did participants describe the impact of life coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to employment?

Significance of the Research

This study advanced knowledge and contributed to the scholarship of justice-impacted individuals and life skills coaching for Black men. Previous research by Wildeman and Wang (2017) recommended further investigations into interventions, policies, and practices to mitigate the harms of incarceration and the post-incarceration period. Anderson et al. (2018) recommended further research on the differences between racial/ethnic groups. Thornton (2018) highlighted the need to examine the reasons for institutional discrimination and how various stakeholders, including individuals, communities, government, and society, played a distinctive role in continuing discrimination against justice-impacted individuals. Chiu et al. (2019) recommended a

better understanding of the lives of justice-impacted Black men within their social context.

Importantly, this study addressed a notable gap in research by investigating Black males' perceptions of how life skills coaching impacted their ability to overcome barriers related to affordable housing, health care, and employment. In alignment with the recommendations of previous researchers, the goal was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge. Therefore, the results of this study could be valuable to researchers and scholars in social sciences, law, education, and life skills coaching for justice-impacted individuals.

Additionally, this study has practical implications and the potential to promote positive social change. Denver et al. (2017) argued that one motivation for allowing more individuals with criminal histories to work was to reduce recidivism and encourage alignment with appropriate social norms. The findings could also support Oliver's (2017) argument that vocational programs should adopt a holistic approach and include interventions to improve justice-impacted individuals. Leasure and Martin (2017) suggested policymakers consider revising expungement laws to include a wider range of justice-impacted individuals with old criminal activity records. Polaschek (2017) proposed offering treatment for mental health alongside support for successful re-entry into the community to minimize recidivism. Sun et al. (2018) recommended interventions addressing systemic-level issues to benefit marginalized communities. Nowotny and Kuptsevych-Timmer (2018) stressed the importance of including incarceration in research and policies addressing the health of Black men in the United States. Finally,

Assari et al. (2018) proposed policies that could reduce preventable incarceration or at least reduce discrimination against justice-impacted individuals.

By investigating how life skills coaching impacted Black males' ability to overcome barriers related to affordable housing, health care, and employment, this study has the potential to offer essential implications for positive social change. The findings could benefit justice-impacted Black men, their families, and their communities, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions were essential in providing clarity for the current study:

BIPOC: Black Indigenous People of Color

Felony: "A crime, typically one involving violence, regarded as more serious than a misdemeanor, and usually punishable by imprisonment for more than one year or by death" (Aviram et al., 2017, p. 296).

Inmate: "A person confined to an institution such as a prison or hospital" (Schinkel & Whyte, 2012, p. 31).

Life coach: "A person who counsels and encourages clients on matters with careers or personal challenges" (Schinkel & Whyte, 2012, p. 32).

Recidivism: "Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrests, reconviction or returned to prison with or without a new sentence during the three years following the prisoner's release" (National Institute of Justice, 2021, p. abstract).

Reentry: "Programs and approaches that focus on [justice-impacted] individuals' behavioral modification through holistic treatment, which begins during incarceration and continues following release" (Miller & Miller, 2015, p. abstract).

Three strikes ruling: According to The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, the "Three Strikes" statute calls for mandatory life imprisonment if a justice-impacted individual: (1) has been found guilty in federal court of a "serious violent felony" and (2) has been found guilty previously two or more times in federal or state courts, at least one of which is a severe violent felony and the other offense may be a serious drug offense (Manning, 2018, p. 217).

War on Drugs: The term refers to "a government-led initiative that aims to stop illegal drug use, distribution, and trade by dramatically increasing prison sentences for drug dealers and users" (Rosino & Hughey, 2018).

Zero tolerance policies: "A set of rules or guidelines a student at an institution of learning must follow or risk facing punishment" (Berlowitz et al., 2017).

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Statistics indicate that 2,336 of every 100,000 Black males in the United States are incarcerated (Bronson & Carson, 2019). After being released, many Black males face various social, emotional, and economic challenges and are often discriminated against for housing and employment (Oliver, 2017). My examination of the existing literature reveals that limited research has been conducted on the role of life-skill coaching and Black males overcoming barriers to housing, health care, and employment. The study aims to investigate formerly incarcerated Black males' perceptions of how life-skill coaching has impacted their ability to overcome barriers related to affordable housing, health care, and employment.

Throughout this chapter, I will examine the literature that addresses how incarceration disproportionately affects Black men, how incarceration shapes discrimination and inequality, the effects of employment and housing discrimination on justice-impacted individuals, and the impact of life skills coaching on the justice-impacted. To begin this examination, I will utilize a theoretical framework grounded in critical race theory (CRT) and examine the topics referenced herein using the CRT lens.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that examines society and culture as they relate and or affect categorizations of race, law, and power in the United States (Delgado et al., 2017). It critically challenges mainstream liberal approaches to how racial justice has been administered in the United States post-Jim Crow era (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Additionally, CRT is a movement that creates

space for the intersectionality between the legal system in the United States of America and race relations. It has provided a platform for scholars and activists to examine the intersectionality between race and US law. Five instrumental tenets or components of CRT, as defined by Delgado et al., are:

- **Racism is ordinary:** Is the belief that "color-blindness and mediocracy" work together in creating the marginalization of people of color by allowing white people to maintain their upper hand on the power differential. Color blindness and mediocracy assist in removing the responsibility white people have for the day-to-day hardships of people of color.

- **Interest convergence:** Whites will allow and support racial justice/progress to the extent that there is something positive in it for them or a "convergence" between the interests of whites and non-whites.

- **The social construction of race:** The belief that race has been socially created and not biological to disproportionately benefit White people and harm people of color.

- **Storytelling and counter-narrative:** People of color have a presumed competence to discuss race and racism that White people do not possess.

- **Intersectionality:** The connectedness between classifications - such as race, gender, and sexual orientation - that create systems of discrimination and marginalization of individuals and groups.

CRT was selected as the theoretical framework for grounding this study, considering its relevance and applications to studying the limited employment opportunities and affordable housing for justice-impacted Black males. I used CRT to analyze how to

overcome barriers related to affordable housing, health care, and employment experienced by justice-impacted Black males. As Freeman et al. (2017) suggested, I applied CRT to understand the perspectives of the selected justice-impacted Black male participants on these aspects. The interviews in this study provided the platform for participants to communicate their beliefs, feelings, and lived experiences. The tenet of counter-narrative is most relevant because the counter-narrative is rarely communicated to the general public. Without the platform, the dominant narrative permeates the culture. This narrative is rooted in the belief that justice-impacted Black males are lazy, lack the motivation to better themselves and their current circumstances, choose to be dependent on social service programs, and, if given the opportunity, will choose predator-like behavior. Not countering this narrative could perpetuate the systemic racism experienced by justice-impacted Black males.

In 1968, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act, outlawing discrimination in the real estate industry by removing the influence of race, religion, sex, and disability (Brown & Jackson, 2013). However, Freeman (1978) noted a distinction between defining discrimination regarding the effects of actions and the intent that motivated the actions. Brown and Jackson (2013) suggested if racial discrimination were eliminated, there would be substantial improvements in employment opportunities and affordable housing for Black people. Gold (2018) demonstrated that CRT observations provided the most convincing explanation for Black Americans' limited employment advancements.

Several researchers have applied CRT to investigate housing needs and race-based challenges, such as employment and affordable housing, experienced by Black people. As their article mentions, Smith and Stovall (2008) examined public housing

strategies as they have played out in the communities in the United States. Their research focused on the policies that streamlined Black people into less-than-desirable housing. Additionally, they provided evidence that some public policies intentionally segregated communities of color. Freeman et al. (2017) research showed that "CRT could be used to gain perspective of Black people's experience with structural racism and the reinforced inequities stratified across racial/ethnic groups" (George, 2021, p. 1). Framed by CRT, Kolivoski explained the dilemma of affordable housing (and lack thereof) that plagues people of color. Implementing a systemic change would assist in creating equitable opportunities for people of color. Among housing needs, three fundamental areas affect communities of color more. These areas reduce the importance of background checks, equitable ratios of low-income/affordable housing compared to market-rate housing, and utilization of supportive housing mechanisms that are not tied to geographical locations. For example, in our local Minnesota community, Hennepin County provides housing vouchers but limits where families can live to use them.

These studies were chosen because they highlight how the tenets that tie to critical race theory are also connected to the systemic racism that shows up in housing, employment, and healthcare practices that eliminate/reduce opportunities for Black people to thrive and prosper, not only by living in safe housing communities but also by having access to the healthcare services that ensure they lead healthy lives.

Incarceration and Black Men

The United States has the highest incarceration rate globally (Adams et al., 2018). Doekhie et al. (2017) examined prisoners' expectations regarding future offending before they were released and why these expectations came true or not after their release from

prison. Using longitudinal data from in-depth interviews with twenty-four prisoners at the end of their sentence and three months after release, Doekhie et al. focused their outlook on criminal activities, social capital and agency factors, and current criminal activities. Doekhie et al. strongly connected illegal and non-criminal expectations and post-release criminal behavior.

Due to the United States having the highest incarceration rate globally, we see dramatic changes in marginalized populations, such as Black men, affected more consistently. An example of a change in Black men is their lack of ability to differentiate between criminal and non-criminal expectations and behavior. This lack of differentiation between criminal and non-criminal behaviors leads to an increase in recidivism. In summary, the high incarceration rate of people in communities of color has caused long-term adverse effects and increased recidivism for the members (Doekhie et al., 2017).

Incarceration Disproportionately Affects Black Men

In the United States, over 60% of justice-impacted individuals are people of color (Harris & Harding, 2019). Black, Latinx, and American Indian/Alaska Native people are more likely to be incarcerated than their White counterparts (Camplain et al., 2020). In particular, incarceration has disproportionately affected Black populations (Wildeman & Wang, 2017). Nearly one in three Black men will experience imprisonment. Almost half of all Black women currently have a family member or extended family member in prison or justice-impacted (Wildeman & Wang). Leveraging variation in gender ratios across the United States, Cottrell et al. (2018) showed that missing Black men were concentrated in the Southeast. Black disenfranchisement rates in some legislative districts were elevated between 20% and 40% of the population.

In the United States, the mass incarceration of Black men has increased physical and mental health concerns for them and their loved ones. For example, HIV acquisition rates in Black women have routinely placed them in the highest risk category. This can be attributed to the disruption of HIV care for formerly incarcerated men and careless behaviors that significantly increase the infection rate of sexually transmitted diseases (Adams et al., 2018). Compared to those who do not, children whose parent(s) experience incarceration disproportionately display damaged social and emotional development (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018).

Many aspects contribute to the incarceration of Black men in the United States. Through the lens of CRT, I have given examples of systemic racism that plague our living experience and day-to-day knowledge transfer. However, Gibson et al. (2017) outline how public libraries deliberately ignore topics supporting communities of color, aligning with the first tenet of CRT. The researchers examined libraries' responsibility to engage with and support communities of color as they challenged systemic racism, engaged in the political process, and exercised their right to free speech. After careful examination, Gibson et al. found that libraries nationwide have ignored the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Gibson et al. also revealed that continuing his phenomenon revealed a lack of consideration for nonpartisanship. Gibson et al. also examined the library's engagement with and disengagement from Black communities through the lens of the BLM movement. They explored the implications of education, employment, and activism for people of color and libraries. Grounded in the critical race theory perspective, the study of Gibson et al. revealed that the assertion that libraries had been socially, and politically neutral organizations was not factual. Gibson et al. found many

libraries that decided not to address issues pertinent to people of color and actively elected not to support the information and service marginalized populations would receive benefits. This irrational use of information dissemination perpetuates biased beliefs toward individuals and communities of color.

Rosino and Hughey (2018) developed a holistic understanding of racial oppression. They analyzed racial meanings and structural racism as it related to the War on Drugs and "proposed a framework that captured the relationship between drug policies and enforcement practices, racialized mass incarceration, the distribution of resources, and the reproduction of racial oppression in the United States" (p. 849). Their research provided further evidence that there is a lasting impact of structural racism and racial meanings in communities and families of color, perpetuating racial and social inequality, especially when the distribution of resources does not favor those communities and families. This inequality is created through laws, institutions, and social norms implemented as an additional weaponized tool against communities and families of color.

Rosino and Hughey (2018) also showed how psychopathy mechanisms worked in tandem to strengthen the connection between racial groups and unequal social positions. The study directly connects with Anderson et al. (2018) findings. Anderson et al.'s outcomes were consistent with earlier studies focusing on the prediction of violent behaviors and also unearthed a significant revelation: the relationship between psychopathy and criminal conduct extends beyond violent offenses to include nonviolent crimes within justice-impacted populations in the United States. By extending their investigation to nonviolent crime, the study broadens our understanding of the connections between psychopathy and criminal conduct in justice-impacted populations

Their research suggested potential differences between the predictive validity of psychopathy among Latinx American offenders and other racial/ethnic groups, which aligns with Rosino and Hughey. This perspective emphasizes the need for comprehensive assessments when considering the predictive role of psychopathy in diverse criminal outcomes. The comprehensive assessments are instrumental in advancing our understanding of psychopathy's impact on criminal behavior. This better understanding as discussed by Anderson et al.'s research, could allow for the development of more effective, individualized interventions, informed policy decisions, and proactive measures for both violent and nonviolent criminal conduct within justice-impacted populations.

Camplain et al. (2020) estimated the association between race/ethnicity and drug- and alcohol-related arrest outcomes. Their research in a county in the Southwest analyzed 36,073 arrests between 2009 and 2018 related to drug and alcohol charges. Through their study, Camplain et al. found that BIPOC individuals were more likely to be jailed for misdemeanor charges than their White counterparts, who were cited and released instead. Additionally, BIPOC individuals were more likely to be convicted of misdemeanor charges than their white counterparts when looking at the specific arrests/years mentioned herein. Furthermore, a correlation was drawn between race/ethnicity and the outcomes of drug-related arrests and the overrepresentation of BIPOC in the criminal justice system. This correlation, however, was not directly connected to the actual overall use of drugs and alcohol.

Discussion

In the United States, incarceration has disproportionately affected Black men and their families (Wildeman & Wang, 2017). Gibson et al. (2017) argued that libraries

should be held accountable for their stated values and put forth strong efforts to engage communities during high-stress times. Anderson et al. (2018) recommended further researching the differences between multiple racial groups regarding systemic community supports designed to create stabilized populations. Rosino and Hughey (2018) uncovered how robust White systems function as community resources but revealed intense structural/systemic racism when examined. Camplain et al. (2020) found a decisive contributing factor to the overrepresentation of BIPOC individuals in the criminal justice system is BIPOC individuals are disproportionately booked into jail and convicted of misdemeanor charges than their White counterparts, who instead were cited and released.

Incarceration Shapes Discrimination and Inequality

Criminal records follow individuals convicted of crimes for the rest of their lives (Westrope, 2018). Upon re-entry into their communities from incarceration, these individuals face societal stigmas that prevent them from engaging in livable-wage employment, obtaining safe and stable housing, and receiving affordable healthcare (Henkels, 2020). In the United States, Black men are at a higher risk/likelihood of being targeted and receiving disproportionate contact (and consequences) within the criminal justice system due to systemic racism/discrimination within the justice system (Hart, 2017). Incarceration and other forms of criminal justice contact ranging from police stops to community supervision are disproportionately concentrated among Black men (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018). Reentry after incarceration, and in tandem with increased stigma and lack of basic-needs resources, rank high as a common experience for young, low-income Black men across their life course in the United States of America (Hart, 2017). This

further increases the opportunity gap that the incarceration cycle started in the first place. It negatively impacts Black former prisoners' access to education, equitable employment, and residential independence/accessibility (Harris & Harding, 2019).

Mass incarceration and other ways in which the criminal justice system infiltrates Black families' lives have resulted in inequality for Black men (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018). Incarceration challenges Black men's ability to reconnect with social institutions such as work, school, and marriage post-release from prison (Hart, 2017). More importantly, incarceration separates these men from their families for extended periods and erodes their relationships with family members and communities. Using the Social-Ecological Theory and Life Course Theory, Hart examined the lives and families of Black fathers who have been justice-impacted. Specifically, Hart recruited 40 incarcerated fathers for life history interviews in a local department of corrections. Hart's findings indicated that incarceration strained the lives of Black men and the development of their children. Incarceration disproportionately affects Black men in the United States (Sun et al., 2018). A critical period for incarcerated Black men is re-entry into the community, often associated with adverse health outcomes (Sun et al.). Additionally, Black men in the criminal justice system are burdened by multiple, intersecting disadvantaged identities and social positions (Sun et al.).

The concept of Black male privilege has become popular in Black gender discourse (Johnson, 2018). Johnson conducted a study and assumed that privilege should be detectable by material standards and measurable if genuine. Johnson argued that research could detect whether or not privilege existed and show how it provided its benefactors with power, opportunities, and resources. To assess the level of material

claims regarding Black male privilege, Johnson tested the theory by focusing on several general areas, including leadership, domestic violence/rape, leading causes of death, income, and employment. Johnson's results indicated that White men's and women's privilege was measurable in various socio-economic contexts. The findings were contrary; Black males receive no added benefit measured by material gains in the previously stated areas.

Using a nationally representative sample of Black men, Assari et al. (2018) examined the associations between a lifetime history of incarceration, discrimination, and mental health- such as depressive symptoms and psychological distress. Using a cross-sectional design, Assari et al. included a sample of 1,271 Black men who participated in the National Survey of American Life (NSAL), 2001–2003. With incarceration history as the primary independent variable and depressive symptoms and psychological distress as the dependent variables, Assari et al. designed everyday discrimination as the mediator. Age, education, and income were covariates. Conducting structural equation models for data analysis, Assari et al. found that incarceration history was positively associated with perceived discrimination, depressive symptoms, and psychological distress among Black men.

Taylor et al. (2018) examined the impact of criminal justice contact on experiences of everyday discrimination among a national sample of Black men. Mainly focusing on daily discrimination, such as commonplace social encounters of unfair treatment among Black men, Taylor et al. used the National Survey of American Life data and provided a descriptive assessment of different types of everyday discrimination among Black men. Taylor et al. also examined the differences in daily discrimination

among men who had never been arrested, those who had been arrested but not incarcerated, and men who had a previous history of criminal justice intervention categorized by type of incarceration experienced, including reform school, detention, jail, or prison. The findings of Taylor et al. revealed overall high levels of reported everyday discrimination, with increased likelihood and a more significant number of experiences associated with more severe forms of Criminal Justice contact. Taylor et al. also found fewer or no differences in reported everyday discrimination for Black men- with and without criminal justice contact in many instances.

Sun et al. (2018) examined community re-entry experiences among Black men from an intersectional perspective. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 16 incarcerated Black men in Wisconsin at pre-release from prison and six months after re-entry, Sun et al. conducted a thematic analysis grounded in the intersectionality theory. The findings of Sun et al. emerged seven themes, including (a) Intersectional Identities and Social Positions; (b) Family Support; (c) Neighborhood Violence; (d) Relationship with Law Enforcement; (e) Employment; (f) Mental Health Concerns; and (g) Medical Care and Medication Management. Sun et al. also found that identities and social positions interacted with factors at multiple levels to inform health care. The authors subsequently developed a conceptual framework to illustrate relationships among themes.

Assari et al. (2018) also revealed that everyday discrimination entirely determined the associations between incarceration history, depressive symptoms, and psychological distress. The results of Taylor et al. (2018) indicated comparable levels of exposure to experiences with unfair treatment among Black men. Sun et al. (2018) demonstrated the

relevance of intersectionality theory in health care for Black men involved in the criminal justice system.

Focusing on mass incarceration and racial inequality, Pettit and Gutierrez (2018) reviewed racial and ethnic differences in exposure to the criminal justice system and its collective consequences. Pettit and Gutierrez found the removal through incarceration of a large segment of earners reinforced existing income and wealth disparities. Pettit and Gutierrez also indicated that patterns of incarceration and felony convictions had devastating effects on voting, political engagement, and overall trust in the legal system within communities. Thornton (2018) aimed to determine the impact of institutional discrimination on the successful reentry of justice-impacted individuals into society. Conducting statistical analysis of 157 survey respondents, Thornton found a positive correlation between institutional discrimination and recidivism within the first 12 months of conviction of a felony and release from a correctional facility.

Tuttle (2019) estimated the effect of access to food stamps on criminal recidivism. In 1996, a federal welfare reform imposed a lifetime ban from food stamps on convicted drug felons. Florida modified this ban, restricting it to drug traffickers who committed their offense on or after August 23, 1996 (Tuttle). Tuttle used this sharp cutoff in a regression discontinuity design and found the ban increased recidivism among drug traffickers. The results of Tuttle indicated the increase was driven by financially motivated crimes, which suggested the cut in benefits caused justice-impacted individuals to return to crime to make up for the lost transfer income.

Harris and Harding (2019) examined explanations for the inequalities among young, Black former prisoners. Using longitudinal administrative data on a cohort of

males on parole aged 18 to 25, Harris and Harding found early post-prison experiences and social context explained some variation. Harris and Harding also proved that considerable racial inequality persisted even as the authors controlled for pre- and post-prison life-course conditions, criminal justice contact, and social context.

Chiu et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study to investigate what life was like for ten men with intellectual disabilities who left prison at least nine months previously. Employing semi-structured interviews, Chiu et al. also explored the men's views of post-prison life, including opportunities, challenges, and support received from services. Through interpretative phenomenological analysis, Chiu et al. found four overarching themes: (a) the nature of support and services; (b) the difficulty of staying out of trouble; (c) the importance of family; and (d) the need to act the tough-guy role. Chiu et al. found the participants reported being extremely under-supported, and they were often frustrated and angry with staff who they felt were too focused on their previous crime.

Social death, the condition of people not accepted as fully human by the broader society due to race and the arrested development of the ability to perceive social cues, is exacerbated for individuals who enter a penal system for long-term sentences (Stearns et al., 2019). In the study of Stearns et al., men who had been incarcerated for seven or more years ranked their feelings of connectivity with the outside world and offered information about their contact experiences. The findings of Stearns et al. indicated visits from friends, visits from other family members, and an inmate's age all exerted a positive and significant force on feelings of connection with the world outside of the prison gates. Poama and Theuns (2019) conducted a study aimed to determine whether criminal disenfranchisement was compatible with a democratic political order. Grounded in

democratic expressivist, Poama and Theuns argued democratic expressivist did not offer a sound justification for criminal disenfranchisement.

Discussion

In the United States, Black men are more likely to be the targets of significant discrimination within the criminal justice system and experience disproportionate/harmful contact with law enforcement (Hart, 2017). As previously stated in Rosino and Hughey's research results, and as a direct consequence of their interactions with the criminal justice system, Black men are kept from achieving the traditional societal markers that would improve their overall quality of life and that are looked at as fundamental rights for their White counterparts. These include education, equitable employment, residential independence, and affordable health care (Harris & Harding, 2019). Sun et al. (2018) suggested that discussing and incorporating a social/ecological perspective into the intersectionality framework previously mentioned herein would help provide a different perspective to theoretical and empirical research. Furthermore, they proposed community-engagement measures that would aid in addressing systemic-level issues and that would benefit disenfranchised communities.

The findings of Chiu et al. (2019) provided additional context to the post-prison lives of Black men. These men were under-supported and normalized the discrimination and lack of opportunities surrounding their lives after their release. Chiu et al. research suggested a better understanding of these men's lives within their social/community context, which would, in turn, help their re-entry into their post-incarceration lives. An additional societal right not given to these disenfranchised men is the right to vote, which excludes them from participating in the shaping/changing of the system that is set up to

continue its oppression of them. Poama and Theuns (2019) suggested that, in addition to correcting criminal wrongs through the expression of democratic values, policies should be created to eliminate criminal disenfranchisement and allow the justice-impacted to vote. This could be achieved by moving away from supporting disenfranchisement and towards an approach that would enable compulsory unlawful voting for a finite period.

In tandem with the prisoners who face shorter sentences and those who take part in the re-entry statistics, there is a set of inmates (dubbed the "forgotten prisoners") who are also affected by the systemic pressures and lack of rights. To their benefit, Stearns et al. (2019) suggested bringing additional attention to these long-term inmates and how the system is continuously affecting them to the point of being forgotten.

Employment Discrimination and the Justice Impacted

Employment is not only a means of survival; it is also the primary recourse to obtaining financial stability and resources. Equitable employment is vital to achieving a good quality of life. Additionally, it allows for both social interaction and self-determination (Westrope, 2018). Gaining honest employment as a re-entering citizen is crucial to creating and retaining both financial and emotional stability in their lives. However, it continues to be an obstacle (Denver et al., 2017). Even after serving their time, the system has put in place roadblocks to eliminate or deter the reentering citizens from equitable employment opportunities. These roadblocks include criminal background checks that are increasingly being incorporated into hiring decisions by employers and which eliminate anyone with a criminal record from being offered employment (Denver et al.). Due to the societal stigma placed around former inmates, employers are often wary of hiring these individuals (Westrope).

Denver et al. (2017) estimated the causal impact of receiving a clearance to work on subsequent arrests for 6,648 individuals with criminal records who had provisionally been hired to work in specific non-licensed healthcare jobs in New York. Employing an instrumental variable approach based on a substantive understanding of the state-mandated Criminal Background Check process, Denver et al. examined age-graded effects within this group of individuals and differential effects by sex in the healthcare industry. The results indicated a 2.2% decrease in the likelihood of a subsequent arrest in one year and a 4.2% decrease over three years. Denver et al. also found significant variations by sex, in which men were 8.4% less likely to be arrested over the three years when cleared compared to a 2.4% effect for women. Denver et al. further indicated older women were driving the nonsignificant results for women.

Parole violations are among the causes of short-term incarceration and have detrimental effects on potential employment opportunities. Harding et al. (2017) examined the impact of this issue as it applies to the labor market. Their results showed that such sanctions were viewed as an additional alternative to long-term re-incarceration. Still, they also had the potential to affect labor market outcomes in the same way as imprisonment. The cause and effect of short-term custody due to parole violation carried the same long-term damage as general re-incarceration. During their short-term custody/incarceration, parolees lost at least 37 percent of their earnings (Harding et al.). Further earnings loss was also present over a longer term after such sanctions. Overall, the results indicated these associations were more significant for those employed in the formal labor market before their initial incarceration.

Oliver (2017) described the difficulties justice-impacted men had when obtaining employment. Specifically, Oliver examined the relationship between perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes in an adult male violent/non-violent offender population. Using a sample of 150 English-speaking adult males with a criminal record, aged 18 and older, and unemployed, Oliver concluded a relationship between their perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude. Oliver's results also supported a connection between the type of offense committed (violent or non-violent), the total number of criminal convictions, the highest level of education completed, their Barriers to Employment Success overall score, and their Job Search Attitude overall score. Oliver found the most significant relationship was between the highest level of education and one's general barriers to employment. He was signifying the higher one's educational attainment, the fewer barriers to obtaining sustainable employment.

Thornton (2018) studied the links between recidivism and employment, housing, and educational discrimination, and denied access to social services. Thornton revealed institutional discrimination had a devastating impact on the successful reentry of Justice-impacted individuals. Zakaria et al. (2018) discussed the difficulties of justice-impacted individuals securing employment and barriers to work. Zakaria et al. argued that employment could reduce recidivism among the justice-impacted; however, most would relapse if they could not find steady and worthwhile jobs. Zakaria et al. indicated detention created a set of experiences for individuals as they often lost their jobs and were discouraged from obtaining employment upon their release. They also showed two main barriers they faced in the labor market: supply and demand. The supply side refers to the justice-impacted characteristics, attitudes, skills, and experience. The demand side

is concerned with employers' perspectives, the economic climate and government policy supporting employment (Zakaria et al.).

Westrope (2018) argued some remedies existed for returning citizens, but they were largely inadequate. Westrope described the four most predominant treatments that attempted to address the problem of employment discrimination against people with criminal records, and explained how each of the remedies failed to rectify the problem:

- **Expungement statutes:** Legal provisions aimed at erasing or sealing a person's criminal record, theoretically providing a fresh start for individuals. Westrope stated that the statutes often fell short of achieving meaningful reintegration due to lingering stigmas and the cumbersome process.

- **Fair Credit Reporting Act protections in the context of background checks:** Sought to regulate the disclosure and use of criminal history information in background checks. Westrope exposed shortcomings in the enforcement of the protections and persistent biases in the hiring process.

- **Title VII claims:** Claims that offer anti-discrimination provisions for employment. Westrope highlighted two profound obstacles in pursuing these claims are the burden of proof is on the claimant and the prolonged legal processes to complete the claim.

- **Ban the box provisions:** Westrope investigated the "ban the box" initiatives, which aimed to remove questions about criminal history from job applications, with the intention of giving individuals an opportunity to showcase their qualifications before their criminal past is disclosed. Despite the promise of these

provisions, Westrope elucidated their limitations and the need for broader systemic change to eliminate employment discrimination effectively.

Focusing on the lived experiences of employers or business owners, Obatusin and Ritter-Williams (2019) explored how they made employment decisions about justice-impacted individuals. Using the data obtained from in-depth interviews with employers who had considered hiring justice-impacted workers in the Baltimore Metropolitan area, Obatusin and Ritter-Williams found perception and trust played significant roles in employers' hiring decisions. Their findings also revealed employers recognized that justice-impacted individuals needed assistance with essential workplace skills. Additionally, they also indicated one of the primary concerns about employing justice-impacted individuals was a backlash from customer perceptions. This concern was based on previously received feedback that included, but was not limited to the following:

- Employers that partnered with nonprofit organizations that served justice-impacted individuals promoted partnerships, and through this promotion, several customers were informed of the employment of justice-impacted individuals.
- Concerns generated from preconceived notions regarding justice-impacted individuals and their criminal backgrounds were brought to customers' attention from external sources (i.e., members of the community) and internal origins (i.e., other employees who shared their concerns.

Mobasseri (2019) examined how exposure to violent crime events affected employers' decisions to hire Black job applicants with and without a criminal record. Employing a quasi-experimental research design, Mobasseri collected the data from a sample of 368 job applications submitted to 184 hiring establishments in Oakland, California. Mobasseri

also studied the archival data of 5,226 crime events. The study results revealed callback rates were 11% lower than for White applicants. Additionally, they were also 12% lower for those with a criminal record than those without any criminal activity related to their background check. Moreover, the results indicated recent exposure to nearby violent crimes reduced employers' likelihood of calling back Black job applicants by 10%, whether or not they had a criminal record. However, this phenomenon did not have the same effect on callback rates for White applicants (Mobasseri).

Discussion

Justice-impacted individuals have historically struggled to obtain employment (Denver et al., 2017). Criminal histories create collateral consequences that make it difficult for these individuals to reintegrate into society (Westrope, 2018). Denver et al. argued that one motivation for allowing more justice-impacted individuals to work would decrease recidivism and encourage resistance. The results in Oliver (2017) claimed vocational programs should take more of a holistic approach. Oliver believed incorporating interventions to improve attitudes, such as motivational interviewing, might help decrease their employment concerns and perceived employment barriers and improve their moods.

Thornton (2018) highlighted the need to examine why institutional discrimination existed and how individuals, communities, government, and society played a distinctive role in continuing discrimination against justice-impacted individuals. Westrope (2018) argued that an anti-discrimination statute that banned employment discrimination against individuals with histories of criminal records would be necessary to benefit both

individuals and society. Westrope proposed the design of a statute, and legislators should work together to ensure the passage of a law banning employment discrimination.

Housing Discrimination and the Justice Impacted

Those convicted of crimes are subjected to a stigma that affects many aspects of their lives, both physically and socially (Evans et al., 2019). Due to this stigma, the justice-impacted find it increasingly difficult to access basic human needs, such as housing and employment (Evans et al.). Housing has been identified as a critical and crucial necessity in re-entry. However, it carries minimal access to justice-impacted individuals (Evans et al.; Henkels, 2020).

Furst and Evans (2016) conducted a qualitative study of a sample of 300 real estate agent responses to telephone calls from researchers posing as individuals with felonies in their background and inquiring about renting an apartment, primarily in New York City. The results indicated criminal conviction type was manipulated across callers who revealed three types of prior convictions: (a) child molestation, (b) statutory rape, or (c) drug trafficking. Furst and Evans found decisions about renting fell within a continuum of responses, including overt rejection, deferral of a rental decision to landlords, ambivalence on the part of the agent, concerns about financial ability to pay rent, and concealing the caller's offense from the landlord. Furst and Evans further explored the reasons for acceptance and rejection of renting an apartment. Their findings were stratified across races, where Black people were rejected disproportionately more than their White counterparts.

Leasure and Martin (2017) examined whether a certificate of employment, which was created to help justice-impacted individuals secure employment, could aid in obtaining

housing. Leasure and Martin also aimed to determine whether housing outcomes varied for older and less severe criminal records. They used a sample of 420 property managers and owners who were randomly selected from a list of stratified neighborhoods and who were then randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups: (a) recent misdemeanor record, (b) felony record with a Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE), (c) old felony record, and (d) a current felony record). The results showed that having a CQE aided in securing affordable housing because it provided an additional credential that allowed the men to gain employment, build employment history, and secure financial means to cover housing and overall living expenses.

Leasure and Martin's research found a nuanced relationship between the severity and recency of offenses and their impact on housing outcomes. Their findings revealed an inverse correlation, suggesting that as the severity and recency of offenses decreased, there was a corresponding improvement in housing outcomes for the justice-impacted individuals. This shows the importance of considering the nature and timing of offenses when assessing their influence on housing stability among justice-impacted.

Kirk et al. (2018) provided a description and preliminary assessment of the Maryland Opportunities through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE), a randomized housing mobility program for justice-impacted individuals. MOVE was designed to test whether residential relocation far away from former neighborhoods, incentivized through the provision of a housing subsidy, could yield reductions in recidivism (Kirk et al.). Implementing the MOVE program as a randomized controlled trial, they recruited the participants from four different Maryland prisons and randomly assigned them to experimental groups. Specifically, in the first iteration of the experiment by Kirk et al.,

treatment group participants received six months of free housing away from their home

jurisdiction, and control group participants received free housing back in their home

jurisdiction. In the second iteration of the experiment, the treatment group remained the

same, and the control condition was redesigned to represent the status quo and did not

receive free housing. Conducting analyses of one-year recidivism rates, Kirk et al.

revealed some benefits to moving and a gift to receiving free housing for reductions in

recidivism. Kirk et al. found that rearrest was lower among the treatment group of movers

than the non-movers and was also lower for non-movers who received free housing

versus non-movers who did not receive housing. Kirk et al. suggested a full-scale

implementation of the MOVE program.

Leasure and Martin (2017) suggested that single-family dwellings might be most

accessible to justice-impacted individuals. Their findings also suggested reentry planning

should encourage justice-impacted individuals to pursue CQEs for purposes beyond their

designed intent. Kirk et al. (2018) suggested policies that provided greater access to

housing assistance for formerly incarcerated individuals might yield substantial public

safety benefits, particularly housing opportunities located far away from former

neighborhoods.

Using the audit method, an experiment in which the researcher maintains one or

two random characteristics about individuals (real or hypothetical) and then sends these

individuals out into the field to test the effect of those random characteristics on a

particular outcome, Evans et al. (2019) examined the effects of race, gender, and criminal

history on housing outcomes. Through placing phone calls to rental property owners

across the Midwest to inquire about renting a property, Evans et al. found powerful

adverse effects for those with histories of criminal behavior seeking apartments, whether the offense was sexual or drug-related. The findings did not indicate any differences between minority and non-minority testers.

Discussion

Housing is one of the most critical necessities during reentry (Evans et al., 2019). However, housing is widely inaccessible for individuals with criminal records in the United States (Henkels, 2020). Leasure and Martin (2017) highlighted the stigma of a criminal record and the resulting negative consequences that continued long after conviction and proposed revising expungement laws to encompass a broader range of justice-impacted individuals with old criminal records. This would undoubtedly aid in their ability to access quality housing. Several studies cited herein have highlighted housing as an essential resource for the re-entry success of justice-impacted individuals (Evans et al.). Additionally, access to housing is critical to leading a healthy life, both physically and mentally (Henkels).

Life Skills Coaching is a Cycle Breaker

Life skills coaching is an intervention steeped in developing strong solid relationships to assist individuals in overcoming challenges they may face upon release from incarceration (Schinkel & Whyte, 2012). These relationships are essential to equip justice-impacted individuals to transition back into communities where their previous relationships may have contained multiple unhealthy components (Umeh, 2019). This intervention includes counseling and encouraging individuals on matters that will provide guidance to overcome careers or personal challenges (Schinkel & Whyte). At the same time, other than the Schinkel & White study, Umeh dissertation, and reporting from

Better Futures Minnesota (2020), I found a substantial body of research highlighting the benefits of life skills coaching. However, when specifically focusing on justice-impacted Black men, the available research was limited. Psychology researchers have concluded that an individual experiences life skills transfer as an ongoing process whereby they continually interact and interpret their environments to produce positive or negative life skills transfer outcomes (Pierce & Schott, 2016). The positive results that Better Futures Minnesota has experienced in implementing life skills coaching as part of its Integrated Care Model mirrors the research conducted by Pierce and other psychologists. Life skills coaching is best administered through informal, face-to-face conferences or intensive case management. If this isn't achievable, it's better to teleconference or find other means to communicate (Better Futures Minnesota, 2020). Life skills coaching provides multiple benefits for justice-impacted individuals. One of the most crucial benefits is the support system created for the individual receiving the coaching that can significantly reduce the likelihood of recidivism (Smyth, 2014).

Summary

Throughout the chapter, I examined how incarceration disproportionately impacts Black men, how it affects discrimination and inequality, and the effects of housing and employment discrimination on justice-impacted individuals. I used critical race theory as the theoretical framework that ran through the details and the data throughout the paper. Additionally, I analyzed how incarceration disproportionately affects Black men and provided evidence. I found additional supporting information to show that imprisonment negatively supports discrimination and inequality through my research. Furthermore, I reviewed employment practices that directly discriminated against the justice-impacted

individuals. In conjunction with employment discrimination, housing practices are also set up to work against justice-impacted individuals. A solution I proposed and discussed was using life-skills coaching as a tool to break the cycle of both discrimination and inequality among justice-impacted individuals.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The study investigated the perceptions of justice-impacted Black male participants in Better Futures Minnesota and how life coaching impacted their ability to overcome barriers related to affordable housing, healthcare, and employment. This chapter describes the methodology, design, and procedures used in the study. The qualitative method chosen for this study was essential in capturing the rich and nuanced experiences of the participants. It allowed for an in-depth exploration of their perceptions and the impact of life coaching on their lives. The phenomenological research design was selected because it focused on understanding and interpreting the lived experiences of the participants. This design provided the opportunity to look into the complexities of the participants' experiences.

The study population was composed of participants from Better Futures Minnesota. The program offered an ample number of participants with varying degrees of participation in the program. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive view of their experiences and insights. Data collection involved in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to extract meaningful patterns and themes. Ethical considerations in research involving human subjects were of utmost importance. The study adhered to ethical guidelines to protect the participants' rights and ensure informed consent. Their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process. The chapter will conclude with a summary, providing an overview of the research methodology and design, ensuring that the study is conducted with rigor and sensitivity to the participants' experiences.

One primary question and three research questions guided this study. The overarching question was, "How did life coaching help justice-impacted Black male participants overcome barriers to affordable housing, affordable healthcare, and employment?" The primary question served as the central focus of the study and sought to explore the overall impact of life skills coaching on justice-impacted Black male participants. The three research questions examined specific aspects of the participants' experiences:

1. How did life skills coaching support the ability of justice-impacted Black males to secure affordable housing?

2. How did life skills coaching contribute to access to affordable healthcare for justice-impacted Black males?

3. How did life skills coaching support justice-impacted Black males in securing sustainable employment?

Research Conceptual Model

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study. Qualitative research primarily involves the collection and analysis of open-ended, verbal, written, or spoken data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative data is not based on numerical measurements and lacks the objectivity associated with quantitative research. Instead, it focuses on the richness of individual experiences and perspectives, making it the central focus of data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Qualitative information is typically gathered by inviting study participants to respond to open-ended questions in their own words, allowing them to share their unique perspectives and contexts. Collecting data from specific perspectives offers the advantage

of studying phenomena in their natural settings without artificial separation. It also allows

for exploratory research, enabling unexpected insights to emerge as participants draw

from their own experiences and introduce new ideas (Merriam & Tisdell).

In this study, the perceived impact of life skills coaching on justice-impacted

Black males' housing, employment, and healthcare outcomes was expected to be closely

intertwined with their social and individual experiences. Using a methodology that allows

participants to incorporate their perceptions of contextual influences into their responses

was appropriate. Additionally, the study aimed to uncover unanticipated themes and

insights, particularly given its focus on addressing gaps in the existing literature

regarding the perceived influences of life skills coaching on these outcomes for justice-

impacted Black males, discussed by Wildeman and Wang (2017), Anderson et al. (2018),

Thornton (2018), and Chiu et al. (2019).

Qualitative research serves as an ideal approach for the initial exploration of a

phenomenon, especially when quantitative analysis may not be practical due to

insufficient prior research or a lack of well-defined hypotheses. In cases involving

entirely new phenomena that have not been previously explored, described, or identified,

qualitative research allows for an in-depth examination and provides a foundation for

future quantitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For these reasons, a qualitative

methodology was chosen for this study.

Design

This study used a phenomenological design to explore the participants' lived

experiences regarding the influence of life skills coaching on their healthcare,

employment, and housing outcomes. Phenomenology is one of the traditional qualitative

research designs, with narrative inquiry, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study being the other four (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this study, the phenomenon of interest centered on participants' perceptions, making their self-reports the most credible source of evidence regarding their experiences.

Phenomenological research, as a design, looks into participants' real-life experiences related to a specific phenomenon. There are two primary branches of phenomenological research. The first, transcendental phenomenology, operates on the premise by focusing on the commonalities among individual perspectives, it is possible to arrive at objective truths independent of individual biases. Initially developed by Husserl on the postpositivist assumption that an objective reality exists and can be accessed by researchers, transcendental phenomenology aims to analyze human experience through qualitative data. It seeks to answer questions about what is experienced, how it is experienced, and the relationship between the object of study and the human experience (Moustakas, 1994).

The other primary form of phenomenological research is hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, which is associated with the work of Heidegger (Suny Press, 2010). Hermeneutic phenomenology challenges the epistemological assumption that objective reality can be accessed by researchers. Heidegger stated that the researcher's preconceptions are inseparable from the description of the phenomenon of interest and should be acknowledged rather than suspended.

This study did not assume that the researcher could entirely set aside their potential preconceptions and biases, nor should they do so. Instead, the researcher's experiences as a former mentor in the Better Futures Minnesota program were leveraged

to showcase participants' perspectives, drawing on the researcher's extensive knowledge of life skills coaching and the organizational context. Therefore, this study adopted a hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenological approach.

Participants

The study's population comprised all justice-impacted Black men who had participated in the Better Futures Minnesota program. The program had a track record of serving more than 1,000 justice-impacted men, with a capacity to serve up to 72 men at one time (Better Futures Minnesota, 2020). While the exact number of current and former Black participants was unknown, the study's inclusion criteria specified (a) Black males, (b) individuals with a history of incarceration in a prison or local jail, and (c) current participants in the Better Futures Minnesota program. All of the participants must have completed the first two segments of the program to ensure they received a minimum of three months of life skills coaching. Given that the Better Futures Minnesota program exclusively served adult males, minors were excluded from the study. An exclusion criterion was established to avoid potential power differentials between the researcher and participants based on preexisting personal or professional relationships.

The study used a purposeful sampling strategy, a common approach in qualitative research. This strategy involved selecting participants who possessed the necessary content and knowledge to provide relevant data for the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). To ensure compliance with the study, site permission was sought from Better Future Minnesota. Subsequently, recruitment flyers were posted within the organization's residential facility. These flyers provided a brief description of the study's purpose and

nature. It invited interested program participants to contact the researcher via email or phone to address questions, and concerns, or volunteer to participate.

When potential participants expressed interest and contacted the researcher, an informed consent form was either emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment or provided as a hard copy at the residential facility. The terms of the informed consent were reviewed with potential participants to ensure their understanding, and any questions or concerns were addressed to their satisfaction. Participants were then invited to consent to participate, and their agreement was documented through their written acknowledgment, "I agree," on the informed consent form. Each participant was associated with a unique alphanumeric pseudonym (e.g., P1, P2) for record-keeping.

In line with Creswell and Poth's (2016) suggestion that qualitative research typically involves between 5 to 25 participants, this study aimed to include a sample of at least 8 participants. If recruitment challenges arose, and a sufficient sample could not be secured, the study would extend its scope to involve former program participants who no longer resided in the facility. The program administrator would be requested to email a digital version of the recruitment flier to men who had exited the program within the last two years, provided their contact information was available. The recruitment email would invite recipients to contact the researcher without revealing their identities unless they initiated contact.

Data saturation, which occurs when data collection methods can no longer yield new information (Fusch & Ness, 2015), would be assessed when a sufficient-sized sample is obtained. After at least 8 participants had been interviewed, their interview data would be transcribed and analyzed. If the data analysis from the last two consecutive

participants (i.e., the seventh and eighth participants interviewed) failed to yield any new

themes beyond those identified in previous data, it would be determined that data

saturation had been reached, and participant recruitment would be terminated. If data

saturation was not achieved with 8 participants, additional participants would be included

until two consecutive interviews produced no new themes or insights.

Data Collection

The data collection method used for this study involved one-to-one, semi-

structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they are a widely

utilized data collection technique in qualitative research (Kallio et al., 2016). In this

format, participants were asked a series of pre-scripted, open-ended questions that could

not be answered with simple "yes" or "no" responses or by selecting predetermined

options. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for follow-up questions to

be formulated and asked whenever additional details or clarification were required. The

advantage of this format was that it enabled the researcher to concentrate on relevant

topics while encouraging participants to respond in their own words. The use of a

predetermined set of questions also contributed to the reliability of the data, ensuring that

the data collection process could be easily replicated.

The interview guide was developed by the researcher and consisted of open-ended

questions designed to elicit responses from participants that were pertinent to addressing

the research questions. To begin, demographic questions were included to contribute to

the transferability of the findings, allowing the researcher to provide a comprehensive

description of the sample in Chapter 4 of the study. These demographic questions sought

to gather information about each participant's duration of incarceration, the total number

of detentions, length of time in the Better Future Minnesota programming, the services

obtained through the program, employment status, housing status, and level of education.

The inclusion criteria specified that participants were justice-impacted Black males. The

interview was expected to last approximately one hour, with the ending being determined

by the participant's ability and desire to answer questions.

Interviews were scheduled while taking into account each participant's

availability. Due to COVID-19 mitigation guidelines recommending social distancing,

the interviews were conducted online through the videoconferencing platform Zoom.

Participants were requested to join the Zoom call in a location where they felt safe, had

privacy, and minimal distractions.

At the start of the Zoom call, the researcher reviewed the terms of informed

consent and reiterated the purpose and nature of the study with the participants. The

researcher invited questions or concerns from the participants, ensuring that any queries

or issues were adequately addressed. Subsequently, the researcher sought the

participant's permission to activate Zoom's integrated audio-recording feature and

announced the participant's alphanumeric pseudonym to associate the interview with the

specific participant.

The interview questions were asked in the sequence outlined in the interview

guide, with probing follow-up questions requested whenever additional details or clarity

were needed. After the interview, participants were allowed to add to their previous

responses. The audio recorder was then deactivated, and the researcher explained the

member-checking procedure. This involved emailing the definitions of the codes and

themes identified in each participant's transcript, and participants were asked to verify or

recommend corrections via email. A follow-up request was sent if participants did not respond to the member-checking request within three days. Phone calls were made to participants that did not reply via email. In cases where participants still did not respond, their data was used, but the lack of member checking for that participant's findings was noted in Chapter 4 as a study limitation. It was anticipated that the member-checking process would take no more than 15 minutes of the participant's time and would be shortened if requested by the participant due to unwillingness to complete the process.

The study design was attentive to the potential absence of inherent solutions in the pursuit of an integrity-driven approach. To address this potential risk, extrinsic and design-based processes were incorporated to enhance the study's trustworthiness and authenticity as a source of information and analysis.

Data Analysis

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents using Otter.ai's automated transcription feature. The transcripts were then meticulously reviewed and refined by the researcher. This process involved multiple readings while simultaneously listening to the recordings and making necessary corrections. Additionally, the researcher took measures to ensure the confidentiality of the participants' identities by replacing their names with alphanumeric pseudonyms (e.g., P1, P2) and removing all personally identifiable information.

The researcher-verified transcripts were subsequently imported into NVivo 12 software as source documents. NVivo 12 is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software known for its capabilities in organizing and managing data. Although NVivo doesn't automate the analysis process, it significantly contributes to the trustworthiness of

the analysis by maintaining a structured organization of codes and themes created by the researcher (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

The data underwent analysis using the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) procedure as described by Smith and Osborn (2008). IPA is a thematic analysis procedure adapted for use in an interpretive phenomenological design, as was the case in this study. The analysis process was inductive, meaning that statements in the transcripts were grouped based on shared meanings rather than predefined categories. This thematic approach enhanced the credibility of the findings by identifying major emergent themes that encapsulated the perceptions of all or most participants.

The first step of the IPA involved reading and rereading the initial transcript and annotating preliminary interpretations of the meanings of phrases and groups of phrases. In NVivo, relevant transcript excerpts were assigned to nodes, and these nodes were labeled with explanatory notes regarding the meaning of the data associated with them. In the second step, the notes generated in the first step were further distilled into themes. This process entailed renaming the NVivo nodes with descriptive phrases that represented a higher level of abstraction than the initial notes, facilitating the connection and grouping of different data elements within and across transcripts. Similar data excerpts were grouped under the same theme.

In the third step of the analysis, the themes identified in the first transcript were clustered. Clustering themes involved listing them and grouping related themes under superordinate themes. As the initial themes were grouped, they were cross-referenced with the transcript to ensure an accurate representation of participant response patterns.

The superordinate themes were labeled descriptively to convey the meaning of the data encompassed under each of them.

The fourth step repeated the first three steps for each remaining transcript, and themes were connected across transcripts. The final phase of the analysis involved presenting the superordinate themes that emerged from the cross-case comparison.

Following the conclusion of the NVivo process, it became evident that additional analysis was required to develop more meaningful and interconnected themes. The final phase of the analysis was completed by the researcher, which included a comprehensive reexamination and further thematic organization of the transcripts. In this final step of the analysis, the researcher engaged in a meticulous review of the transcripts, aiming to enhance the depth and coherence of the identified themes. This process involved a reevaluation of the recorded audio interviews, allowing the researcher to gain a more profound understanding of the nuances within the data.

During this phase, the researcher actively re-listened to the recorded interviews, seeking to gather additional insights and connections among the themes that may have initially gone unnoticed. The objective was to refine the analysis, ensuring that the themes captured the participants' perspectives and experiences. This thorough approach to the final analysis stage was vital in enhancing the quality and accuracy of the study's findings, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the research data.

The forthcoming chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, will look deeper into the analysis in detail: Chapter 4 will contain an in-depth analysis of the themes and findings derived from the study. Chapter 5 will engage in a discussion of the same areas explored

in the study. Both chapters will be analyzed and discussed within the framework of my

previously shared CRT theoretical framework.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the qualitative research conducted in this

phenomenological study focused on establishing trustworthiness and authenticity,

ensuring that the resulting representation of the dataset was both honest and credible.

This was accomplished through a comprehensive approach that prioritized the ethical

handling of data.

To enhance trustworthiness and authenticity, the researcher observed and

analyzed the recorded Zoom meetings. This involved a thorough examination of the data,

including note-taking to capture critical details and nuances. In cases where additional

clarity was required, the researcher scheduled follow-up visits with participants. These

practices were crucial in maintaining the research's integrity and authenticity, aligning

with Creswell's (2015) standards and recommendations for preserving trustworthiness

and authenticity.

A fundamental aspect was the researcher's commitment to understanding and

addressing any potential researcher bias, as emphasized by Creswell (2015). Throughout

the study, the researcher was diligent in acknowledging and managing their own potential

biases, ensuring that the research process remained as objective and unbiased as possible.

This was integral to the study's commitment to producing trustworthy and authentic

outcomes.

Trustworthiness and authenticity were reinforced through the application of a

rich, thick description, as elucidated by Creswell (2015). This approach aimed to provide

readers with a comprehensive and vivid portrayal of the research participants and the study setting, allowing for informed judgments regarding the transferability of the findings. The descriptions offered in the study were concise, interconnected with the data, and sufficiently detailed to enable readers to form well-informed opinions about the research.

To solidify the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study, the researcher ensured that the descriptions were vivid, and included evidence for support. This support included the incorporation of impactful quotes and background information about the participants, adding depth and context to the narratives within the study. These practices collectively reinforced the study's commitment to presenting an honest and credible representation of the research data, in line with established qualitative research principles.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical research standards concerning human subjects, as outlined in the Belmont Report Friesen et, al., (2017), were integral to the research process. The report established three fundamental standards: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, all played a significant role in ensuring the ethical conduct of this study.

Respect for persons encompassed the principle of upholding participants' autonomy throughout the research. This was achieved by providing clear and comprehensive information to all potential participants regarding the study's purpose and nature, primarily through the recruitment flier. Participants were informed during the informed consent process that their participation was entirely voluntary, with the assurance that they could decline participation without facing any negative consequences. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point, with or

without providing a reason, and without any adverse effects following their decision. Furthermore, participants were informed of their option to decline to answer any interview question (s) at any point during the interview. The informed consent process involved participants indicating their agreement by writing or typing "I agree" on the consent form, with their alphanumeric identifier also recorded in written or typed form. These measures were designed to safeguard participants' autonomy and were adhered to throughout the study.

The standard of beneficence was upheld by ensuring that participants' best interests were top priority. This study offered direct benefits to participants; this was transparently conveyed during the informed consent process. Participants who participated in the study received a Target gift card. The gift card was not dependent upon completion. Moreover, the study entailed minimal risks to participants, with a clear assurance that these risks would not surpass those encountered in their everyday activities. Potential risks associated with the disclosure of participants' identities were effectively mitigated through stringent confidentiality procedures. All study materials solely referred to participants using alphanumeric pseudonyms (P1, P2, etc.), and all personally identifiable information was meticulously removed from the interview transcripts during transcription. An essential key connecting each participant's pseudonym with their phone number was created and retained exclusively through the member-checking process. This key was stored securely on a password-protected data drive accessible solely to the researcher. The audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews were similarly retained only on this secure data drive. Following the

completion of the retention period stipulated by the IRB, the data drive would be securely destroyed.

The principle of justice in ethical research is centered on ensuring an equitable distribution of risks and benefits. In this study, the risks were minimal, and direct benefits to participants were calculated. The study held the potential to yield insights that could ultimately benefit individuals belonging to the population of justice-impacted Black males from which the participants were drawn. The insights from this study could contribute to the enhancement of the life skills coaching processes. This balance of minimal risks and direct benefits enhances the commitment to a just and equitable distribution of risks and benefits throughout the research.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research provides the researcher with a unique avenue to study the experiences shared by participants, enabling the interpretation of the profound meaning inherent in those experiences (Creswell & Cresswell, 2017). The decision to embark on a study concerning the lived experiences of justice-impacted Black males who had undergone life skills coaching was closely tied to the researcher's professional background and life experiences.

Cresswell communicated the importance of researchers acknowledging their biases and personal backgrounds, as these factors could significantly influence the interpretation of the data generated during the study (Cresswell & Cresswell). The researcher, a Black male, brought a wealth of professional expertise to the study, having held numerous leadership, coaching, and guiding positions. Additionally, the researcher

previously filled a leadership role at Better Futures Minnesota, the organization in which the study's participants were selected.

The researcher's experience and background in leadership, coaching, and the design of high-integrity studies enriched the study with an attitude of openness and receptivity. The researcher embraced the role of an active listener, remaining attuned to every facet of the findings, recognizing that personal experiences and expertise, as emphasized by Creswell, "have likely shaped the . . . approach to the study" (p. 251). This wealth of experience created a strong foundation for the study. It created an environment where the researcher could engage deeply with the data, remain open to diverse perspectives, and effectively navigate the complexities of the lived experiences of the participants and the researcher.

The researcher created transparency to the unique perspective and the potential influence of his background on the research process. This transparency was crucial in ensuring that the study was conducted with objectivity and a commitment to understanding the experiences of the participants while accounting for the researcher's own experiences and insights.

Summary

In this study, a qualitative methodology combined with an interpretive phenomenological design was employed to explore the research objectives. The study's methodological approach, as well as the various procedures involved, were executed with careful consideration of ethical and practical principles. Purposeful sampling was implemented through the posting of recruitment flyers within the Better Futures Minnesota residential facility. It was essential to create an environment where

participation in the study was entirely voluntary, reflecting the principles of informed consent. Before data collection was conducted, participants were fully informed about the research's purpose and nature and willingly provided their consent to participate.

The study included a sample of eight justice-impacted Black males who were actively participating in the Better Futures Minnesota program. The concept of data saturation was adopted as a guiding principle to determine when a sufficient number of participants had been included, ensuring that the research encompassed a rich and diverse range of perspectives.

Data collection was carried out through one-to-one, semi-structured interviews. The interview format was constructed around a researcher-developed interview guide. These interviews were conducted via the online video conferencing application, Zoom. The transcripts underwent a verification process and were de-identified by the researcher. This was important in safeguarding the confidentiality of the participants and ensuring the ethical handling of their personal information.

The collected data was subsequently subjected to a rigorous analysis within NVivo 12 software. The research followed an inductive, thematic interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) procedure, aligning with the study's overarching design.

Maintaining the confidentiality of participants' identities was paramount. In all study materials, their names were replaced with alphanumeric pseudonyms (P1, P2, etc.). The recordings were stored on a password-protected flash drive, with access limited to the researcher. All measures were taken to safeguard the privacy of the participants and protect their identities throughout the study.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to investigate justice-impacted Black males' perceptions of how life coaching through the Better Futures Minnesota program impacted their ability to overcome affordable housing, healthcare, and employment barriers. The primary research question used to guide this study was: What are the effects of life skills coaching for justice-impacted Black male participants in overcoming barriers to affordable housing, affordable healthcare, and employment? The following three sub-questions were developed to provide a deeper focus for the study:

SQ1. How do participants describe the impact of life skills coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable housing?

SQ2. How do participants describe the impact of life skills coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable healthcare?

SQ3. How do participants describe the impact of life skill coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to employment?

The participants were a purposeful sample of eight justice-impacted Black males who participated in the Better Futures Minnesota model during their transition out of incarceration.

The following sections of this chapter describe the barriers to obtaining affordable housing, healthcare, and employment. The three themes and four sub-themes illustrate how participants were impacted by life skills coaching: Coaching as an Information source, Adopting New Perspectives (Subthemes: Feeling respected, Feeling Encouraged, Developing Confidence, and Mindset and Accountability), and Skills improvement.

The Burden of the Criminal Record

Participants noted barriers to obtaining affordable housing, affordable healthcare, and employment. These included having a record, attitudinal barriers, and low self-confidence.

While participants developed a stronger sense of trust in themselves and the team at Better Futures due to their help in eliminating the barriers referenced above, it was clear that the stigma surrounding their criminal records was an obstacle to obtaining housing, employment, and insurance. For example, a participant shared that he felt judged for having been incarcerated and was denied a home loan due to his felony record. Repeat offenders also provided a lack of trust in themselves in the housing, employment, and healthcare systems. The resounding message was the essential support that the Life Skills Coaches provided in battling these stigmas and barriers, which was also helpful regarding the participants' credit history or lack thereof.

Justice-impacted Black males struggled with a multitude of inherited effects of having a criminal record. These effects include license revoking, losing the right to vote, thereby losing their right to participate in the democratic process, and being blocked from certain career paths such as education, healthcare, and security. Additionally, until recently, there was an overall lack of educational options for justice-impacted individuals. This continues to perpetuate the economic instability among this already-affected population.

Having a Record

Having a criminal record creates significant barriers for individuals seeking atonement for their past by re-establishing themselves in the workforce. In most cases, a criminal record can hamper the ability to find a good job and reduce one's earning potential. This, in turn, may harm their credit history. Employers have a legal right in most cases to investigate the criminal record of prospective employees via a background check and may not move forward with a candidate for employment based on findings. This information is common knowledge in the workforce and manifests with justice-impacted men not receiving employment opportunities. Participant 3 stated, "I wouldn't finish applications because of discrimination against having felonies. Even my credit score hurt me—a lot of avenues closed because of my credit score."

The criminal record is not a one-off experience. Justice-impacted men have to routinely explain their past, which creates a scenario of potentially reliving historical trauma. The daily repetitive nature of denial due to documented historically poor decision-making that leads to a criminal record can be overwhelming. Participant 4 stated that "the barrier is real. I deal with it every day, and I see people dealing with it every day. I had no way in which to obtain things due to the fact of my criminal history, one; income, two; and credit score, three." As presented by Participant 4, the three factors described add to the overall barrier of being justice-impacted and part of the criminal system. While P4 rated the three factors in this order, the reality is that the three are equally impactful in these men's lives.

Mindset Barriers

Justice-impacted men face additional barriers that affect their ability to maintain consistent employment. Some barriers may appear self-inflicted or even senseless mindsets? as some justice-impacted men think with strong conviction that "working is for suckers." As P4 stated:

"You're talking to someone who always believed that anyone who wants to work is a sucker. I get up in the morning and I look around and I go to do whatever I want to do. I can never be in that rat race. I can never be a part of that. So I had the wrong core value. I also thought that working would be a waste of my time. I knew I would not earn enough to put me in a position where I would feel comfortable, healthy, or happy. So again, I would go to my life skills coach, who would teach me the importance of employment."

An additional attitudinal barrier also relates to work, specifically work stamina. Work stamina is the mental fortitude required when the desire to keep working diminishes. Due to the lifestyle of less-than-desirable decision-making and criminal activity, many of the men depended on income; they had not developed the skills associated with work stamina. Life skills coaches routinely supported the men with encouragement and education on the importance of employment. Participant 4 stated that the Better Futures life skills coaches addressed this and "always stressed how valuable and important employment was." Participant 1 communicated a positive transformation in mindset toward work facilitated by the life skills coach, "My life skills coach helped open my eyes and realize if I'm not working, I won't ever have a lot of stuff I like. Then he taught me how to be responsible, very responsible."

Having the ability to make choices creates value in accomplishing goals, and achieving set goals could be the difference between freedom and immediate incarceration for justice-impacted men. Specifically, employment goals can be elusive if a consistent mindset of eliminating excuses and making healthy choices hasn't been established. Regarding going to work every day, P2 stated,

> "I mean, excuses are a luxury. Gives you a chance to do nothing about the situations that you deal with. So I mean, it's a choice. It's a choice to want to make the right decision to go to work, and to make different decisions."

Low Self-Confidence

Confidence can be the driving force that allows you to move forward with positive opportunities and/or engage with people who may be able to support your dreams and aspirations. Justice-impacted Black men described their need to have someone believe in them and the importance the belief played in not quitting when things didn't work out as planned. For P2, confidence was simple: "It was holding myself accountable. You know, not expecting someone else to do the work for me, but always knowing that someone was there in case I had a question or felt down." That down feeling P2 referenced can be removed when confidence is developed, even if it's motivated by an extrinsic factor such as a life skills coach. Furthermore, Participant 4 shared that "it's nice to know that you have someone to support you when you're walking through those times and give you the confidence to get you where you're going." This testimony provides additional evidence to support that having someone who not only works to remove barriers but directly works to engage justice-impacted men on a human

level creates a ripple effect that improves their confidence, thus improving their skills and outlook for the future.

Themes

This study developed recurring themes that resonated with multiple justice-impacted men and their stories. These were: Coach as an Information Source; Adopting New Perspectives; and Skills Improvement.

Coach as an Information Source

Four participants said that Better Futures Minnesota life skills coaches helped them find affordable housing by providing information. Participant 2 said, "They give you the right information that leads you up to having a choice. And they were always there for me with that. [I] appreciate that." Participant 2 added that Better Futures life skills coaches were available as resources when questions about housing arose so that he could conduct his housing search, adding that he always knew "that someone was there in case I had a question." Participant 3 said of Better Futures, "It was good at giving me the information . . . it told me my options." Participant 3 added that Better Futures was effective at providing information, but that initiative was still required of clients: "They could point you in the direction from point A to point B, but you gotta be able to take the initiative to do it yourself." Participant 4 also described Better Futures life skills coaches as providing him with information as a basis for his decision-making related to housing: "They gave me support and information to help me make a good, conscientious decision."

Three participants reported that Better Futures life skills coaches assisted them in overcoming barriers to obtaining affordable housing by coaching them and walking them through the housing application process. Participant 4 said:

They talked to me about several things, preparing me to, for example, fill out the [housing] application. They would take me to do the interview and look at the property. They took me from the beginning, held my hand, and walked me through the entire [housing application] process . . . They took me from the beginning of just a basic application, taught me everything, and showed me, "Hey, look, don't worry about this barrier, that barrier, that barrier. We're gonna get you through all of those." And they did.

Participant 5 associated the housing application information and assistance he received through Better Futures with staying out of jail: "Better Futures allowed me to get stable housing, which in turn has kept me from incarceration." He described how a life coach walked him through the process of overcoming barriers to housing: "They helped me get an ID when I first came home, and my first life skills coach even provided the resources for me to go to jail to pick up my check that they had for me." (Identification and deposit money were needed to obtain housing.) Participant 7 spoke of being walked through preparations by his life skills coach to ensure he was in a stable and responsible position that would enable him to obtain affordable housing: "They're trying to teach you what the barriers are, more or less. Before we put you in housing, they'd ask, can you hold a job? Can you make sure you're not going with the same crowd?" This participant said his life skills coach supported his preparation and helped him in "getting a solid foundation . . . they just opened the door more for that." Thus, the participants

indicated that Better Futures life skills coaches provided wraparound support, giving them information, life coaching, and encouragement throughout the housing application process. In the case of P1, the participant who provided discrepant data indicating that Better Futures life skills coaches had not yet (at the time of the study) helped to obtain housing reported that he and his life skills coach were still working to help him get his own home and that he was living with his parents in the meantime.

Life skills coaching helped participants overcome the obstacles to affordable healthcare by providing essential information resources that supported the participants' trust development in the healthcare system and decreased the anxiety generated in the application process. Participant 1 stated his life skills coach "taught me how to do my budget plan and taught me how to go grocery shopping. Basically, how to budget my money." At the time of the interview, participants had current healthcare or were in the process of obtaining it. This essential tool for leading a more stable life creates a stronger sense of security and provides justice-impacted men with the certainty needed to continue their path toward sustainable success.

Seven of the eight participants reported that they had affordable health care at the time of the study. Six of the participants who had health care reported that Better Futures life skills coaches had helped them obtain it. One participant provided data indicating that he did not have health care, and another provided discrepant data indicating that he had health care but that Better Futures had not helped him obtain it. The six participants who reported that Better Futures helped them access affordable health care indicated that life skills coaches had assisted them by providing information relevant to their current goals and status. When asked how his life skills coach impacted his ability to get affordable

health care, P2 stated, "Honestly, they took care of all that stuff for me. All I had to do was just give my information." Participant 3 affirmed, "My life skills coach helped me get the healthcare coverage I have now." Participant 5 described how Better Futures life skills coaches helped him and other justice-impacted men access affordable health care: "They helped us get enrolled with the county to get medical assistance, as far as helping with the medical attention we needed, like dental exams, or even mental health evaluations. So, when it came to medical, they were there." Participant 6 provided data indicating that he had not seen a doctor since his release from incarceration and was still working with his life skills coach to get health care.

Three participants stated that in addition to helping them apply for healthcare coverage through the county, Better Futures life skills coaches had assisted them in getting affordable healthcare by providing them with information. Participant 4 stated that Better Futures life skills coaches helped him to get the treatment he needed for a previously undiagnosed mental health condition by providing him with information that convinced him of the importance of mental health:

> What I didn't know was that mental health is serious and real, and what I thought was embarrassing was a very, very real mental disorder. So, they [Better Futures life skills coaches] were able to talk to me, tell me how to go about it, but more importantly, they were able to show me firsthand. So, being able to take care of yourself and your mental health, physical health, all of them are important, but mostly for me, it was mental health because I didn't know that I could go talk to someone that would help get me together and put me in front of my situation.

Participant 5 said that life skills coaches assisted him and other justice-impacted

individuals with information about how to fill out the necessary forms for obtaining

health care: "For those who did have complications with understanding the forms and

filling them out, or even getting access to the forms, whether it was getting on a computer

and printing them up, the life skills coaches were there to help." Participant 5 indicated

that he filled out the forms to obtain healthcare coverage through the county from the

Better Futures office, where life skills coaches checked in with him occasionally to make

sure he had the information he needed: "They will come in here and ask me, "Do you

need some help? Are you finding everything okay?" So, they were there to assist me if I

did need any help." Participant 7 stated that Better Futures life skills coaches contributed

to his health by coaching him about self-care, with advice such as, "Pay attention to what

you eat and what you put in your body as far as drinking and smoking," for, "basically

making sure that you didn't do those things again."

Life skills coaching provided the participants direction, support, and

encouragement by conducting employment searches, assisting in intangible skill

development (interpersonal and intrapersonal communication), resume writing, and

application completion. Through this assistance, participants were either gainfully

employed or further along in the employment process at the time of the study.

Six out of eight participants reported that Better Futures life skills coaches

assisted them in obtaining employment and that they were employed at the time of the

study. One additional participant reported that he was not seeking employment because

of a disability. The eighth participant indicated that he had obtained employment without

assistance from Better Futures life skills coaches. The employment assistance they

reported receiving included encouragement and coaching on applying for and interviewing for jobs.

Adopting New Perspectives

Adopting new perspectives can bring advantages for a variety of people. The participants in this study reported their new perspectives brought benefits, both personally and professionally fostering creativity, adaptability, and enhanced decision-making. They focused on four sub-themes described below that broadened their worldview and allowed them to focus more on achieving their transformation.

Feeling Respected

Participant 2 also indicated that Better Futures life skills coaches helped him to become employed by showing him respect: "They were always there, in respect, to help me in the things that I needed without forcing it on me, without looking down on me." Participant 2 said that the respect his life skills coaches showed him helped him get a job by holding him to a standard of accountability: "When people [are] around you and they respect you, you feel like you're going to be accountable." This statement highlights the importance of fostering respectful and supportive relationships in facilitating positive personal and professional development outcomes.

Feeling Encouraged

Six participants indicated that Better Futures life skills coaches helped them to overcome employment barriers by providing them with encouragement and emotional support during their job search process. Asked what assistance he received from Better Futures in seeking employment, Participant 1 answered, "He was there for me all the time. He was encouraging me to find employment." Participant 2 said that he learned

perseverance from his Better Futures life coach: "I learned how to take care of myself, how to go get a job, how to not quit until I get a job. So those things they instilled in me early, I never had a problem getting the job."

Participant 4, who formerly thought that working was for "suckers," said that the encouragement and coaching he received from his life coach helped him change his values and appreciate the importance of employment:

My life coach taught me the importance of employment . . . where you can take

that hustler mentality and that hustling skill that you have, and just transfer it over

to legal, transferable skills . . . I think you call it a paradigm shift, where you look

at things altogether different than you did before. That man [my life coach]

changed my mind, changed my heart. He changed my belief, changed the way I

look at things.

Participant 4's statement aligns with what has been previously stated regarding the importance of developing core values for justice-impacted Black males to sustain their transformation change. Unfortunately, the life coaches are also entrusted with breaking stereotypical stigmas based on the environment in which the justice-impacted men find themselves. However, through the work with the life coaches, these men shift their mindset, and embrace new opinions on making healthy decisions, influencing a more positive outlook and outcome.

Developing Confidence

One-way Better Futures life skills coaches helped justice-impacted Black males overcome barriers to affordable housing, four participants said, was by providing confidence-building feedback and support during the housing application process. This

positive feedback is a continuous effort over an elongated period for the participants. Participant 3 said his coach encouraged him multiple times to "pretty much just keep striving, keep going forward, moving forward. Don't get discouraged." Participant 4 said of the life skills coaches, "They walk you through those times and give you the confidence to get you where you're going . . . it helped me believe more in myself." Participant 5 stated that life skills coaches helped him adopt a more positive attitude that contributed to his perseverance during his housing search: "They really helped me when I needed somebody to coach me through life, doing it positively, on a positive level, versus the normal way that I have been accustomed to living and doing things." Participant 7 also said that encouragement from his Better Futures life skills coach helped him persevere through his housing search: "He basically helped me stay focused and just stay on task, not giving up." This relentless pursuit of confidence is a consistently daunting task for life skills coaches. They must routinely support positive reinforcement while delivering encouraging feedback over 18 months that men can participate in the program.

Participant 5 stated when referring to confidence building, "They gave me training, hands-on training to learn how to do decon work, as well as building maintenance, and breaking down appliances." Building confidence is essential in developing a strong positive mindset contributing to sustainable workforce success. Additionally, it breaks down old mentalities disrupting the cycle of negative behavior.

Mindset and Accountability

Justice-impacted men in this study worked with coaches to change their perspectives about work, which was an attitudinal barrier to their success. Participant 6 also reported that Better Futures life skills coaches helped him to change his habitual

attitude to one more conducive to employment. Participant 6 explained that Better Futures life skills coaches encouraged him to realize that employment was worthwhile, even if it involved submitting to supervision.

The paradigm shift in thinking for justice-impacted men is one aspect of the transformational change needed for sustainability in their newly embraced community. Another aspect that acts as a key lever to success is accuracy in their performance. Participant 4 stated, "My life skills coach was really big on making sure everything was done the right way. I couldn't have done it without him." The support connected with the shift in mindset is explained further by Participant 4 as he described his opportunities: "My life skills coach gave me the opportunity to see something that I thought was out of reach. I get to go as far as I can. It's on me to do things the right way."

Personal accountability can open doors that may lead to increased opportunities. This idea is explained by Participant 7 who stated, "My life skills coach taught me the responsibility of looking at myself, holding myself accountable. . . . I mean, the doors just started opening when I pointed the finger at myself." Self-accountability, first led by collective accountability initiated by the life skills coach, created a stronger sense of self. In succession, this helped Participant 7 engage in self-reflection to improve his personal and professional outlook further. This journey described by Participant 7 underscores the significance of external guidance and a supportive environment in fostering individual accountability and empowerment.

Skills Improvement

Some participants stated that they learned job skills with the assistance of Better Futures. Some of these skills, such as forklift training, refrigerant recycling, OSHA-10

certification (Construction Site Safety), and small engine repair provided immediate

employment opportunities for the men.

Three participants said that Better Futures life skills coaches helped them

overcome employment barriers by coaching them in skills that would help them get a job,

such as interviewing. Participant 1 said, "The help was there to find employment. Every

day, we'll talk about employment and how we can improve for interviews and things like

that." Participant 5 reported that he received help writing his resume: "They were

especially helpful with giving me job leads and pointing me in the direction of who I can

talk to, and the assistant would help me with getting my resume together." Better Futures

life skills coaches also assisted Participant 5 in developing a business plan to help him

become self-employed. He added:

> A lot of people that were involved in Better Futures, from my understanding . . .
>
> they were entrepreneurs themselves. And so, what they would basically tell us
>
> was, don't work for somebody for the rest of your life when you could put
>
> together a business proposal and a business plan, start your own LLC, and be your
>
> own boss. The life skills coach did discuss those possibilities, so I have a few
>
> LLCs [limited liability companies] myself. Now I'm just trying to do the things
>
> that I need to get the capital to get those ventures up and running. . . Maybe it's
>
> time to reach out to some of my life skills coaches from the past who are going to
>
> actually be my mentors, so they can look over my business proposal and tell me,
>
> "Maybe you should change this, maybe you should change that," so they can help
>
> me be able to take my future to the next level.

Participant 7 corroborated Participant 5's response by stating that the coaches taught clients about "owning your own business, [which] teaches you a lot as far as LLCs."

Regarding learning marketable skills, Participant 5 said:

They gave me hands-on training to learn how to do decontamination of vacated apartments, as well as maintenance, and breaking down appliances. So, dealing with the life-skills-coaching employment side, and the opportunities they were able to assist me with, I now have skills which I can actually use as a trade, hands-on, to start different types of business ventures on my own, thanks to the life skills coach at Better Futures.

Participant 3 also reported learning marketable skills: "I will say the skills are obtained from Better Futures, and just throughout ordinary life, I did learn a few trades that I didn't know before coming to Better Futures." However, this participant provided information indicating that he did not obtain work using the skills he learned through Better Futures. Participant 6 indicated that life skills coaches from Better Futures taught him life skills that he needed to place himself in a financial position in which he could obtain housing: "They taught me how to save money to put down for my deposit."

Based on the barriers described at the beginning of this chapter, the themes discussed in this section revealed the impact the Better Futures program had in helping the justice-impacted to find affordable housing, healthcare, and meaningful/sustainable employment. Life skills coaching assisted participants by developing strong/positive personality traits, such as self-confidence, trust, and motivation to improve their lives. This was accomplished by helping them develop skills and addressing the stigma tied to

their criminal past. The emphasis on life improvement through coaching eliminated barriers and allowed participants to achieve affordable housing.

Summary

The study examined the effects of life skills coaching on justice-impacted Black male participants, specifically focusing on overcoming barriers related to systems intricately tied to affordable housing, affordable healthcare, and employment. The three primary themes identified—Coach as Information Source, Adopting New Perspectives, and Skills Improvement—provide a comprehensive overview of the positive impacts of life skills coaching.

The theme Coach as Information Source suggests that life skills coaching served as a valuable reservoir of information for participants. This could include guidance on navigating affordable housing options, accessing healthcare resources, and securing employment opportunities.

Participants Adopting New Perspectives highlights a broader shift in mindset and outlook among participants. The four sub-themes—Feeling Respected, Feeling Encouraged, Developing Confidence, and Mindset and Accountability—provide a nuanced understanding of the psychological and emotional aspects affected by life skills coaching. These sub-themes suggest that life skills coaching not only provided practical information but also contributed to the participants' sense of self-worth, motivation, and personal responsibility.

Feeling Respected indicates that life skills coaching fostered an environment where participants felt acknowledged and valued. *Feeling encouraged* suggests that positive reinforcement and support were crucial elements of the life skills coaching

experience. Developing confidence implies that participants experienced a boost in their self-assurance, potentially enhancing their ability to face challenges. *Mindset and Accountability* focuses on the importance of a positive mindset and taking responsibility for one's actions in the context of life skills development.

Overall, the study highlights the multifaceted impact of life skills coaching on justice-impacted Black male participants, not only in terms of acquiring practical skills but also in fostering a positive and transformative change in their perspectives and attitudes towards making healthy decisions. This information is valuable for creating interventions and support systems aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by justice-impacted Black men denied by the previously stated systems.

Chapter 5 will include a discussion and interpretation of these findings.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to investigate justice-impacted Black male perceptions of how life coaching impacted their ability to overcome affordable housing, healthcare, and employment barriers. Life skill coaching is an intervention used to help individuals deal with challenges upon release from incarceration and bridge the gap between where they are now and where they want to be (Schinkel & Whyte, 2012). Negative interactions while incarcerated are not germane to Black males; however, they are more susceptible to violent crimes such as drug use, gang violence, and assault with weapons such as shanks and knives (Bell, 2017). Therefore, this research sought to examine the perceptions of Black justice-impacted men regarding the impact of life skills coaching on their ability to overcome challenges of affordable housing, healthcare, and employment barriers after their prison terms.

A qualitative phenomenological research design was used in this study. The data collection was accomplished through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are the most common data collection method in qualitative research (Kallio et al., 2016). Thematic data analysis was conducted to achieve the final results. The overarching research questions used to guide this study were:

RQ1: How do participants describe the impact of life coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable housing?

RQ2: How do participants describe the impact of life coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable healthcare?

RQ3: How do participants describe the impact of life coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to employment?

These well-structured research questions target key areas of participants' lives affected by life skills coaching. They provide a roadmap for exploring how life skills coaching contributes to overcoming housing, healthcare, and employment barriers.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Research questions and themes are described below. One primary research question and three sub-questions guided this study. The primary research question was, "What are the effects of life coaching for justice-impacted Black male participants in overcoming barriers to affordable housing, affordable healthcare, and employment?" The sub-questions are discussed below.

Research Questions Discussion

The discussion and interpretation of findings were based on the research sub-questions described below. The three sub-questions relate to securing affordable housing, healthcare, and employment. The questions allow the participants to describe life skills coaching's impact.

Sub-Question One

SQ1 was: How do participants describe the impact of life skills coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable housing?

Although one participant revealed that Better Futures life skills coaches had yet to assist him in obtaining housing, most participants agreed that Better Futures life skills coaches had helped them in various ways. The results indicated two primary barriers to housing: their poor credit histories and the stigma surrounding their criminal records. The

findings imply that life skills coaches assist participants in obtaining housing despite these specific barriers. The findings concur with previous literature. Pettit and Gutierrez (2018) demonstrated that reentry after incarceration, with increased stigma and lack of basic-needs resources, ranks high as a common experience for young, low-income Black men across their life course in the United States of America. Upon reentry into their communities from incarceration, justice-impacted Black men face societal stigmas that prevent them from obtaining safe and stable housing (Henkels, 2020). Obtaining houses becomes a hurdle for them; they need information on how to gain a residence. As a result, life skills coaching provides them with crucial information about the application process to obtain housing.

Navigating a poor credit barrier was consistent with previous research indicating that criminal records follow individuals convicted of crimes for the rest of their lives (Westrope, 2018). Such barriers negatively impact justice-impacted Black male's access to education, equitable employment, and residential independence/accessibility (Harris & Harding, 2019). Leasure and Martin (2017) also established that life skills coaching might help obtain skills to help justice-impacted individuals secure aid in getting housing.

The participants reported that life skills coaches provided information about housing and how to apply for support and provided encouragement and emotional support to participants as they applied for housing. The findings indicated that life skills coaches provided wraparound support, giving information and encouragement throughout the housing application and employment process. This support is pivotal for the participants in their transformational journey.

Sub-Question Two

SQ2 was: How do participants describe the impact of life skills coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to affordable healthcare? The findings that addressed this question follow.

While most participants reported positive experiences obtaining healthcare assistance from life skills coaches, one reported not receiving any support. This result highlights the importance of ongoing evaluation and adaptation in life skills coaching. Six participants reported that life skills coaches helped them access affordable health care, indicating that life skills coaches had provided them with information and support with completing applications. Further, life skills coaches assisted justice-impacted Black males in integrating into the community by providing relevant information regarding how to apply for healthcare services. The implication is that justice-impacted Black males could access affordable healthcare through life skills coaching. These results align with prior literature indicating that life-skills coaching has supported justice-impacted Black male's ability to overcome barriers related to affordable housing, health care, and employment (Wildeman & Wang, 2017; Thornton, 2018).

Related to the participants' experiences with obtaining health care, past studies indicate that offering treatment for mental health minimizes recidivism (Polaschek, 2017). Further, the authors suggested that support focused on successful reentry into the community would minimize recidivism among former incarcerated Black males (Polaschek, 2017; Sun et al., 2018). However, Assari et al. (2018) proposed policies that could reduce what they believed to be preventable incarceration or at least a reduction in discrimination against those who were justice-impacted by offering essential resources

such as housing and healthcare access. Formerly incarcerated Black men are kept from achieving the traditional societal markers that would improve their overall quality of life. Such disparity denies them access to affordable healthcare, education, equitable employment, and residential independence (Harris & Harding, 2019). Providing support services, including life skills coaching and training, would help these Black men overcome challenges affecting their access to affordable housing and healthcare.

Justice-impacted Black males experience disparities in healthcare access upon re-entering their community. Access to mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and general healthcare may be limited, impacting overall well-being. As a result, a better understanding of these men's general healthcare needs before exiting prison would provide context and help their reentry into their post-incarceration lives (Chiu et al., 2019). The findings in this study represent a multi-issue approach to coaching, which contrasts with prior research by Sun et al. (2018), where the emphasis was solely on providing mental health support to facilitate the reentry of justice-impacted Black males. This study emphasizes the value of diverse perspectives and approaches for reentry and sheds light on the importance of a tailored approach for the unique challenges each justice-impacted Black male encounters during reentry.

Sub-Question Three

SQ3 was: How do participants describe the impact of life skills coaching on their ability to overcome barriers to employment? Findings addressing this question were as follows:

The findings demonstrate that life skills coaches assisted and resulted in justice-impacted Black men in obtaining employment. However, one participant indicated that

he had obtained employment without assistance from the life skills coaches. The assistance included encouragement and coaching in applying and interviewing for a job and training in job skills. The implication is that coaching and encouragement through offering employment skills may help justice-impacted men gain employment. As indicated in current research findings, prior literature revealed that while incarcerated for an extended period, some justice-impacted men will not acquire the education or develop the vocational or technological skills needed to compete for employment in the current workforce, making them dependent on other means for income (Oliver, 2017). As a result, this calls for life skills coaching and job training to equip them with the necessary job skills for future employment.

Whereas justice-impacted Black males experience difficulties securing employment outside of prison, they are discouraged when seeking careers that require contact with children, health service occupations, security, and law (Zhang, 2018). According to Zhang, the lack of confidence in pursuing such careers can be remedied by confidence development. Notably, this study shows that the support and assistance provided by life skills coaches prepared participants for positions they may not have traditionally been deemed qualified for, did not have the confidence to pursue, or lacked training and job skills.

In states where procedures permitted the hiring of justice-impacted individuals, employers frequently were reluctant when considering individuals with criminal backgrounds for employment, thereby exacerbating economic instability (Flake, 2015). Justice-impacted Black males often needed job training support to enhance their employability (Ramakers et al., 2016). The outcomes of this study build on existing

literature, reinforcing the idea that employment assistance from life skills coaches can play an important role in aiding justice-impacted Black males in securing employment. This support could reduce the likelihood of recidivism while interrupting the cycle of recidivism.

The research findings from the study show the role played by life skills coaches in assisting justice-impacted Black males in overcoming the employment barriers they faced. The life skills coach served as a mentor who offered multifaceted support by providing encouragement and emotional assistance throughout the challenging job-seeking process.

Life skills coaches supported the participants with confidence building and motivation. Their encouragement played a crucial role in bolstering the participants' self-belief, which was important when faced with the overwhelming stigma associated with a criminal background. This emotional support provided a foundation, empowering individuals to confront the challenges posed by the job market.

Beyond emotional support, life skills coaches took a proactive approach by sharing practical skills and knowledge essential for successful job attainment. These encompassed diverse competencies, from aiding participants in developing business plans—paving the way for self-employment—to equipping them with resumes suitable for the job market. By providing these practical skills, the life skills coach assisted in increasing the participants' employability and armed them with tangible tools for securing meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities.

Research findings also revealed that life skills coaches helped justice-impacted Black males overcome employment barriers by encouraging them and providing

emotional support during their job search. Life skills coaches helped justice-impacted Black males overcome employment barriers by coaching them in skills that would help them get a job, such as developing a business plan to assist them in becoming self-employed and helping them learn marketable skills on the job market. The results imply that life skills coaching helped justice-impacted Black men overcome barriers to employment by providing them with encouragement, job skills, paths to self-employment, and emotional support during their job search.

Current research findings are consistent with Ramakers et al. (2016), who found that justice-impacted Black male individuals with stable employment are three times less likely to recidivate than unemployed justice-impacted individuals (Flake, 2014). However, initially obtaining employment once released from prison is challenging. Although some barriers to working for the justice-impacted are associated with a lack of education, skills, and felony status, other barriers are related to employers' reluctance to hire justice-impacted individuals because of certain perceived risk factors (Engel et al., 2016). These barriers can be overcome by coaching them in skills that would help them get employment, such as developing a business plan to assist them in becoming self-employed and helping them learn job skills (Bucknor & Barber, 2016). The importance of these educational opportunities cannot be overstated. They play a pivotal part in the success of justice-impacted Black males because they facilitate understanding the direct correlation between wages and the skills required for employment (Bucknor & Barber, 2016).

Although employers may understand the plight of justice-impacted as it relates to employment and provide them second-chance opportunities, their company policies may

disqualify those with felony convictions (Griffith & Young, 2017). Griffith and Young

(2017) report that gaining job skills may help Black men become employed. These

findings contribute to previous literature by establishing that life coaching helped justice-

impacted Black males overcome barriers to employment by providing them with

encouragement, job skills, and emotional support during their job search.

Themes Discussion

The themes discussion and the interpretation of findings were based on the critical

analysis of eight participants' answers during their interviews. Three primary themes and

four sub-themes were derived from the analysis. The three primary themes are

appropriately titled: Coach as Information Source, Adopting New Perspectives, and Skills

Improvement. Under the *Adopting New Perspective* theme, four sub-themes emerged:

Feeling Respected, Feeling Encouraged, Developing Confidence, and Mindset and

Accountability.

Primary and Sub-Themes:

1. Coach as Information Source

   This theme suggests that participants perceived the coach as a valuable source

   of information providing guidance, knowledge, and insights that contribute to

   the participants' understanding or skills development. As Participant 4

   remarked, "**They gave me support and information to help me make a**

   good, conscientious decision."

2. Adopting New Perspectives

   This theme suggests a transformation change where participants are

   encouraged to utilize different and/or multiple perspectives for engaging in

familiar historical experiences. It involves a shift in mindset, a change in how they perceive themselves or others, and an openness to different and new ways of thinking. For example, Participant 6 stated, **"He showed me a different way to look at things. He taught me how to just stay still on the right path, not giving up."**

Sub-Themes under Adopting New Perspectives

- Feeling Respected:

  This sub-theme indicates that participants experienced a positive shift in how they felt respected. This could have been due to the specific coach or the experience throughout the coaching process. Participant 2 said that the respect his life skills coaches showed him helped him get a job by holding him to a standard of accountability: **"When people [are] around you and they respect you, you feel like you're going to be accountable."**

- Feeling Encouraged:

  This sub-theme suggests that participants experienced a sense of motivation or positive reinforcement from their life skills coach and/or throughout the coaching process. Participant 5 stated that his life skills coach **"really helped me when I needed somebody to coach me through life, encouraging me."**

- Developing Confidence:

  This sub-theme implies participants were able to build self-assurance and belief in their abilities. This confidence could contribute to various aspects of their personal and professional lives to assist with healthy decision-

making. In one case, Participant 2 stated his confidence helped him look at barriers differently: **"I don't look at barriers or things like that as bad things. I look at those barriers as opportunities."**

- Mindset and Accountability:

  This sub-theme suggests a connection between adopting new perspectives and a shift in mindset and accountability. Participants communicated they experienced changes in approaching challenges and taking responsibility for their actions. For Participant 2 life skills showed him the importance of **"holding myself accountable and not expecting someone else to do the work for me."**

3. Skills Improvement:

   This theme suggests that participants experienced growth or enhancement in specific skills generally related to but not limited to employment. Participant 1, for example, stated that his life skills coach **"taught me how to do my budget plan, how to go grocery shopping, and how to budget my money."**

In summary, these themes and sub-themes provide an understanding of the experiences and outcomes of the participants in the coaching process.

Theoretical Conclusion

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was chosen as the theoretical framework based on its ability to better understand how race operates in society and challenge systems of oppression that align with the experiences of justice-impacted Black males. While CRT consists of five fundamental tenets, I have a specific interest in discussing the fourth tenet—storytelling and counter-narrative. This tenet recognizes the influential role of

narratives in shaping perceptions and understanding of racial issues. "Storytelling" or "Counter-Narrative" in Critical Race Theory is the tenet that focuses on the power of individual and collective narratives to challenge and reshape social, legal, and historical written or spoken narratives. This tenet recognizes that the dominant narratives in society often reflect the perspectives and interests of the majority or dominant culture, and they perpetuate stereotypes, biases, and injustices against marginalized racial and ethnic groups. By giving voice to communities that have been historically silenced or marginalized, this tenet can expose aspects of racism and discrimination. It magnifies the importance of storytelling for advocacy, education, and social change. Castelli (2021) outlines the counter-narrative tenet purpose and objective:

> Counter-storytelling is used to magnify the stories, experiences, narratives, and truths of underprivileged communities. . . . Even when an underprivileged community is at the center of the storytelling, the narrative tends to come from elite or privileged individuals outside of the community. This means that the community and their experience is only seen through the filter of the dominant culture. . . . Counter-storytelling creates space for community voices to create the narrative that defines their own experiences and lives. By giving power to the voices of individuals and communities, counter-storytelling fights against the dominant culture narratives that lack the knowledge and wisdom that minority individuals hold about themselves and their traditions, cultures, communities, homes, struggles, and needs. (p.1)

In this study, Justice-impacted Black men were given the platform to provide their own narratives or perhaps the counter-narrative to what dominant culture has defined as

the potential or definition of the justice-impacted Black male. The dominant narrative is one that defines the justice-impacted Black males as lazy, unmotivated, dependent on entitlement programming, and a threat to community safety. However, this study challenges that dominant narrative by suggesting that justice-impacted Black males have a counter-narrative and highlights lived experiences as trying to navigate healthcare, employment, and cumbersome housing systems not designed for marginalized populations with limited experience or background as to how to participate in them. The counter-narrative focused on dispelling stereotypes and misperceptions about justice-impacted Black males. It emphasizes their strong motivation, desire to contribute to their communities actively, and commitment to personal growth and development. This counter-narrative opposes the unfair characterization of being lazy, unmotivated, or perceived as a threat based on their past involvement with the justice system. Justice-impacted Black males are not lazy or unmotivated. On the contrary, they have a strong desire to work and contribute to society in meaningful ways. They are committed to developing job skills and acquiring knowledge, indicated by their dedication to self-improvement and personal growth. These individuals are eager to put their acquired skills and knowledge to practical use, contributing to their betterment and the well-being of their communities. Their counter-narrative seeks to replace negative stereotypes and biases with a more comprehensive and fair portrayal of justice-impacted Black males, emphasizing their agency, resilience, and determination to lead productive and fulfilling lives while contributing positively to their communities.

Their counter-narratives provided an alternative that challenges and reshapes dominant ideologies for a more accurate account of the experience of justice-impacted

Black males. Their realities are given life through the short, documented stories they have provided. These stories create a gateway to understanding how the dominant narrative may contribute to systemic oppression, ignoring the lived experiences and stories of the justice-impacted men. This counter-narrative truth emerges in this study when justice-impacted men discuss the effects of systemic racism as opposed to the system's version of them, which only holds the men accountable for their actions and choices without a more complete understanding. Justice-impacted Black men, once released from prison, face societal assumptions about their interest in becoming employed. Dominant racial views assume they have no desire to make an honest living and prefer utilizing social service programs. However, these men tell a different story. They are eager to put their acquired job skills and knowledge to practical use through gainful employment, contributing to their own betterment and the well-being of their communities.

The participants believe life skills coaching is a significant asset to their sustained success in navigating housing, employment, and healthcare systems because it correlates with providing additional support and resources denied to them by systemic racism. This can be perceived to be in direct conflict with the notion and narrative that any American should be able to pull themselves up by their "bootstraps." That narrative perpetuates the dominant perspective until marginalized populations' stories are elevated, creating the opportunity to receive an alternative narrative. The dominant perspective tends to persist until marginalized populations can share their stories, thus offering an alternative narrative. Storytelling is important for marginalized communities. It serves as a vital means of communication to express their lived experiences and a natural challenge to prevailing narratives of oppression and racial inequality (Bell, 2010).

In conclusion, a theoretical exploration of storytelling and counter-narratives within the framework of CRT provides a better understanding of the complexities of race, law, and social dynamics in the United States. It allows for a critical examination of the narratives that define legal discourse, the daily treatment of justice-impacted Black males, and insights into the potential narrative transformation in pursuing racial justice.

Implications for Practice

The study findings may be used by employers who create policies to allow for the employment of justice-impacted individuals to reduce recidivism. Denver et al. (2017) argued that one motivation for allowing more individuals with histories of criminal activity to work would decrease recidivism and encourage alignment with appropriate social norms. Law enforcement agencies may also use the findings to create and implement policies for helping justice-impacted individuals access affordable housing and healthcare. Oliver (2017) argued that vocational programs should take more of a holistic approach and incorporate interventions that target improving justice-impacted individuals.

Further, policymakers would also benefit from this study's findings, which may help them consider revising expungement laws to encompass a wide range of justice-impacted individuals with histories of criminal activity deemed to be old. Assari et al. (2018) proposed policies that could reduce what they believed to be preventable incarceration or at least reduce discrimination against those who were justice-impacted. By investigating Black males' perceptions of how life-skill coaching has impacted their ability to overcome barriers related to affordable housing, health care, and employment, this study points to necessary implications for Black communities that are more

disadvantaged. The findings help promote positive social change, such as mentorship and training programs for potential job skills to enhance employability. Black men who are justice-impacted, their families, and their communities benefit from the results of this study.

Limitations of the Study

The single geographical location of the participants and the program they were enrolled in limited the study. Participants were selected from the Better Futures Minnesota model in Minneapolis, Minnesota, thereby limiting the transferability of study results to other settings. Using Zoom for the interviews and audio recordings.. may have restricted body language and nonverbal cues, hindering researcher insight. However, I attempted to overcome this limitation by listening closely to participants' voice inflections during the interview. Purposeful sample selection versus random selection for participants was used. While important and needed for this study, purposeful sampling may encourage researcher bias. Other racial groups were not included. As a result, the findings are not transferable to other racial populations, such as Whites, Hispanics, or Asians.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study and the findings presented represent a significant advancement in our understanding and contributions to the scholarship concerning justice-impacted Black males, and the role life coaching plays in their sustainable success. Wildeman and Wang (2017) have previously encouraged further research into interventions, policies, and practices to mitigate the adverse consequences of incarceration and the challenges faced during the re-entry period. Anderson et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of

exploring variations between racial and ethnic groups in this context, underlining the need for comprehensive research considering the diversity of experiences.

Thornton (2018) drew attention to the critical need to examine the root causes of institutional discrimination against justice-impacted individuals and understand the distinct roles played by individuals, communities, government agencies, and society in perpetuating such discrimination. This study contributes to this imperative exploration.

Furthermore, Chiu et al. (2019) recommended a deeper understanding of the lives of justice-impacted Black men within their broader social contexts. This research aligns with this call for an in-depth exploration of the nuanced experiences of this specific population.

As we look to the future, it is essential to consider conducting similar studies using even larger and more diverse datasets from various geographical locations, encompassing a broader range of racial and ethnic populations. Such an approach will not only enhance the generalizability of findings but also provide a more comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities faced by justice-impacted individuals across different contexts and demographics.

Conclusion

This study examined Black male former inmates' perceptions of how life coaching impacted their ability to overcome affordable housing, healthcare, and employment barriers. Participants revealed that life skills coaching helped them overcome these barriers by assisting them with skills improvement, the coach being an information source, and the participants adopting new perspectives.

The study expands on previous literature by establishing that life coaching helps justice-impacted Black men get employment, overcome barriers, and access affordable health care and housing. As a Black male, the personal impact of conducting this study was transforming in many nuanced ways. Having experienced firsthand the implications of systemic racism and the ripple effects of being justice-impacted, giving voice to the voiceless has forever changed my life. My position as vice president of services at Better Futures Minnesota allowed me to communicate with the justice-impacted Black male participants directly. This study affirms the goals of my work and positions life skills coaching as a critical factor in addressing the needs of justice-impacted Black males. My work was designed to highlight life skills coaching as a solution to the dysfunctional cycle justice-impacted Black males routinely find themselves caught in, ultimately landing them back in prison. This study served as a platform to amplify the voices and lived experiences of justice-impacted Black men, offering a counter-narrative to the dominant story that often fails to capture their true desires and struggles. It aligns with CRT's focus on counter-narrative, which seeks to challenge prevailing narratives and showcase the lived realities of marginalized communities. This affirmation serves as a foundation for continued advocacy, research, and initiatives to create positive outcomes for one of the most high-need populations in the United States.

I believe life skills coaching is vital due to the transformative potential it has in the lives of justice-impacted Black males. Coaching is one of the most critical components in addressing the needs and potential sustained success for justice-impacted Black males.

References

2022 induction ceremony. American Academy of Arts & Sciences. (2023, March 2).

    https://www.amacad.org/news/2022-induction-ceremony

Adams, J. W., Lurie, M. N., King, M. R. F., Brady, K. A., Galea, S., Friedman, S. R.,

    Khan, M. R., & Marshall, B. D. L. (2018). Potential drivers of HIV

    acquisition in African-American women related to mass incarceration: an agent-

    based modelling study. BMC Public Health, 18, 1387 (2018).

    https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6304-x

Alper, M., Durose, M. R., & Markman, J. (2018). 2018 update on prisoner recidivism: A

    9-year follow-up period (2005-2014). Washington, DC: US Department of

    Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

    https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf

America's war on drugs - 50 years later. The Leadership Conference on Civil and

    Human Rights. (n.d.-a). https://civilrights.org/blog/americas-war-on-drugs-50-

    years-later/

Anderson, J. R., Walsh, Z., & Kosson, D. S. (2018). Psychopathy, self-identified

    race/ethnicity, and nonviolent recidivism: A longitudinal study. *Law and Human*

    Behavior, 42(6), 531.

Assari, S., Miller, R. J., Taylor, R. J., Mouzon, D., Keith, V., & Chatters, L. M. (2018).

    Discrimination fully mediates the effects of incarceration history on depressive

    symptoms and psychological distress among african american men. *Journal of*

    Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, *5*(2), 243–252.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-017-0364-y

Aviram, H., Bragg, A., & Lewis, C. (2017). Felon disenfranchisement. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, *13*, 295-311.

Bell, K. E. (2017). Prison violence and the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and gender. *Criminology, Criminal Justice Law & Society*, 18, 106.

Bell, L. A. (2010). *Storytelling for social justice: Connecting narrative and the arts in antiracist teaching*. Routledge.

Berlowitz, M. J., Frye, R., & Jette, K. M. (2017). Bullying and zero-tolerance policies: The school to prison pipeline. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, *12*(1), 7-25.

Better Futures Minnesota. (2019). *Integrated Care Model*. Retrieved September 28, 2021, from https://betterfuturesminnesota.com/

Brame, R., Bushway, S. D., Paternoster, R., & Turner, M. G. (2014). Demographic patterns of cumulative arrest prevalence by ages 18 and 23. *Crime & Delinquency, 60*(3), 471–486.

Bronson, J., & Carson, E. A. (2019). Prisoners in 2017.

Brown, K., & Jackson, D. D. (2013). The history and conceptual elements of critical race theory. In *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 29-42). Routledge.

Bucknor, C., & Barber, A. (2016). *The price we pay: Economic costs of barriers to employment for former prisoners and people convicted of felonies* (No. 2016-07). Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). https://cepr.net/images/stories/reports/employment-prisoners-felonies-2016-06.pdf

Camplain, R., Camplain, C., Trotter II, R. T., Pro, G., Sabo, S., Eaves, E., Peoples, M. (2020). Racial/ethnic differences in drug- and alcohol-related arrest outcomes in a

Southwest county from 2009 to 2018. American Journal of Public Health, 110(S1), S85-S92. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305409

Castelli, M. (2021, November 4). *Introduction to critical race theory and counter-storytelling*. Noise Project. https://noiseproject.org/introduction-to-critical-race-theory-and-counter-storytelling/

Chiu, P., Triantafyllopoulou, P., & Murphy, G. (2019). Life after release from prison: The Experience of Ex-offenders With Intellectual Disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, *33*(4), 686–701. https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12661

Christopher Uggen, R. L. (2022, November 23). Locked out 2022: Estimates of people denied voting rights. The Sentencing Project. https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/locked-out-2022-estimates-of-people-denied-voting-rights/

Cottrell, D., Herron, M. C., Rodriguez, J. M., & Smith, D. A. (2018). Mortality, incarceration, and African American disenfranchisement in the contemporary United States. American Politics Research, 47(2), 195-237. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X18754555

Creswell, J. W. (2015). *30 essential skills for the qualitative researcher*. Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. Sage publications.

Delgado, R., Stefancic, J., & Harris, A. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction.* New York University Press.

Denver, M., Siwach, G., & Bushway, S. D. (2017). A new look at the employment and recidivism relationship through the lens of a criminal background check. *Criminology, 55*(1), 174–204. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12130

Doekhie, J., Dirkzwager, A., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2017). Early attempts at distance from crime: Prisoners' prerelease expectations and their post-release criminal behavior. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 56*(7), 473-493.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5(1),* 1-4.

Evans, D. N., Blount-Hill, K. L., & Cubellis, M. A. (2019). Examining housing discrimination across race, gender and felony history. *Housing Studies, 34*(5), 761-778.

Flake, D. F. (2014). When any sentence is a life sentence: Employment discrimination against ex-offenders. *SSRN Electronic Journal.* https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2523179

Freeman, D., Reeve, S., Robinson, A., Ehlers, A., Clark, D., Spanlang, B., & Slater, M. (2017, March 22). *Virtual reality in the assessment, understanding, and treatment of mental health disorders: Psychological medicine.* Cambridge Core. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/virtual-reality-in-the-assessmentunderstanding-and-treatment-of-mental-health-disorders/A786FC699B11F6A4BB02B6F99DC20237

Friesen, P., Kearns, L., Redman, B., & Caplan, A. L. (2017). Rethinking the Belmont

    report?. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, *17*(7), 15-21.

Furst, R. T., & Evans, D. N. (2016). Renting apartments to felons: Variations in real

    estate agent decisions due to stigma. *Deviant Behavior*, *38*(6), 698–708.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2016.1197635

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative

    research. The Qualitative Report, 20(9), 1408-1416.

Gibson, A. N., Chancellor, R. L., Cooke, N. A., Dahlen, S. P., Lee, S. A., & Shorish, Y.

    L. (2017). Libraries on the frontlines: Neutrality and social justice. Equality,

    Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal.

George, J. (2021). A lesson on critical race theory - american bar association.

    https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_h

    ome/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/a-lesson-on-critical-race-theory/

Gold, S. J. (2018). A critical race theory approach to black American

    entrepreneurship. *Intersectionality and Ethnic Entrepreneurship*, 145-166.

Griffith, J. N., & Young, N. C. J. (2017). Hiring ex-offenders? The case of ban the box.

    Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, *36*(6), 501–518.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/edi-04-2017-0066

Harding, D. J., Siegel, J. A., & Morenoff, J. D. (2017). Custodial parole sanctions and

    earnings after release from prison. Social Forces, 96(2), 909-934.

Harris, & Harding. (2019). Racial Inequality in the Transition to Adulthood After Prison.

    RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences, *5*(1), 223.

    https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2019.5.1.10

Hart, J. R. (2017). Fathering After Incarceration: Navigating the Return of Young, Black

    Men to Families, Jobs & Communities (Doctoral dissertation).

Heidegger, M. (2010). *Being and time*. Suny Press.

Henkels, J. (2020). *Housing discrimination at the intersection of health condition, race,*

    and felony status [Honors Thesis, University of North Carolina].

    https://doi.org/10.17615/fmre-cr57

Hillyer, H. A. (2015). Reducing the Rate of Prison Recidivism in Florida by Providing

    State Corporate Income Tax Credits to Businesses as an Incentive for

    Employment or Ex-Felons. Barry L. Rev., 21, 105.

Home. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. (2023, September 11).

    https://civilrights.org/

Hopkins, M. (2018). Banning the Box: The Solution to High Ex-Offender

    Unemployment? The University of the Pacific Law Review, 49(2), 513-532.

Johnson, T. H. (2018). Challenging the myth of Black male privilege. Spectrum: A

    Journal on Black Men, 6(2), 21-42.

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic

    methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured

    interview guide. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 72(12), 2954-2965.

Kirk, D. S., Barnes, G. C., Hyatt, J. M., & Kearley, B. W. (2018). The Impact of

    Residential Change and Housing Stability on Recidivism: Pilot Results From the

    Maryland Opportunities Through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE). *Journal of*

    Experimental Criminology, *14*(2), 213–226. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-017-

    9317-z

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Teaching in dangerous times: Culturally relevant approaches to teacher assessment. *Journal of Negro Education*, 255-267.

Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2011). Beyond constant comparison qualitative data analysis: Using NVivo. School Psychology Quarterly, 26(1), 70.

Lacity, M. C., Rottman, J. W., & Carmel, E. (2016). Impact Sourcing: Employing Prison Inmates to Perform Digitally Enabled Business Services. In Socially Responsible Outsourcing (pp. 138-163). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Leasure, P., & Martin, T. (2017). Criminal records and housing: An experimental study. Journal of Experimental Criminology, 13(4), 527-535.

Manning, M. G. (2018). Trouble Counting to Three: Circuit Splits and Confusion in Interpreting The Prison Litigation Reform Act's Three Strikes Rule, 28 USC Sec. 1915 (G). *Cornell Journal of Law & Public Policy*, *28*, 207.

McNeeley, S. (2018). A long-term follow-up evaluation of the Minnesota High Risk Revocation Reduction reentry program. Journal of Experimental Criminology, 14(4), 439-461.

Merlo, A., & Wolpin, K. I. (2015). The transition from school to jail: Youth crime and high school completion among black males. European Economic Review, 79, 234-251.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation. John Wiley & Sons.

Miller, H. V., & Miller, J. M. (2015). A promising jail reentry program revisited: Results from a quasi-experimental design. Criminal Justice Studies: A Critical Journal of Crime, Law & Society, 28(2), 211–225.

Minnesota Department of Human Services Housing and Support Services Division

    (2018). Minnesota statewide initiative to reduce recidivism: Combined

    application form joint departmental pilot initiative. Retrieved from

    https://mn.gov/doc/assets/DOC%20DHS%20CAF%20Pilot%20Project%20Evalu

    ation%202018_tcm1089-362911.pdf

Mobasseri, S. (2019). Race, place, and crime: How violent crime events affect

    employment discrimination. American Journal of Sociology, 125(1).

    https://doi.org/10.1086/703883

Moustakas, C. (1994). Phenomenological Research Methods. Sage.

National Institute of Justice. (2021). Property crimes. Retrieved from

    https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/crime/property-crimes

News. District of Minnesota | News | United States Department of Justice. (2021, July 3).

    https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/pr

Nowotny, K. M., & Kuptsevych-Timmer, A. (2018). Health and Justice: Framing

    incarceration as a social determinant of health for Black men in the United States.

    Sociology Compass, *12*(3). https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12566

Obatusin, O., & Ritter-Williams, D. (2019). A phenomenological study of employer

    perspectives   on hiring justice-impacted. Cogent Social Sciences, 5(1), 1571730.

Oliver, A. (2017). *Employment barriers and attitude to employment for male ex-offenders*

    [Doctoral dissertation, Cleveland State University].

    https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/

Ollove, M. (2013, August 22). State resistance to federal government goes back to U.S.

    beginnings. The PEW Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from

http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-

andanalysis/blogs/stateline/2013/08/22/state-resistance-to-federal-government-

goes-back-to-beginnings

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N.,

& Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection

and analysis in mixed method implementation research. Administration and

Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 42(5), 533-544.

Petersen, I. B. (2015). Toward true fair-chance hiring: Balancing stakeholder interests

and reality in regulating criminal background checks. Tex. L. Rev., 94, 175.

Pettit, B., & Gutierrez, C. (2018). Mass incarceration and racial inequality. The

American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 77(3-4), 1153-1182.

https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12241

Pierce, J. R., & Schott, P. K. (2016). The surprisingly swift decline

of US manufacturing employment. *American Economic

Review*, *106*(7), 1632-1662.

Poama, A., & Theuns, T. (2019). Making Offenders Vote: Democratic Expressivism and

Compulsory Criminal Voting. American Political Science Review, 113(3), 796-

809.

Polaschek, D. L. L. (2017). Prevention of Recidivism and Violent and Aggressive

Offenders. *The Wiley Handbook of Violence and Aggression*, 1–

12.https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119057574.whbva088

Ramakers, A., Nieuwbeerta, P., Wilsem, J. V., & Dirkzwager, A. (2016). Not just any job

will do: A study on employment characteristics and recidivism risks after

release. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 1-24.

Robertson, H. C., & Hayden, S. C. (2018). Serving all that served career development among at-risk veterans. Career Planning & Adult Development Journal, 34(4).

Rosino, M. L., & Hughey, M. W. (2018). The war on drugs, racial meanings, and structural racism: A holistic and reproductive approach. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, *77*(3-4), 849-892.

Schinkel, M., & Whyte, B. (2012). Routes Out of Prison Using Life Coaches to Assist Resettlement. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, *51*(4), 359–371. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2012.00724.x

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods, (2nd ed., pp. 53–80). Sage.

Smith, J. J., & Stovall, D. (2008). "Coming home" to new homes and new schools: critical race theory and the new politics of containment. *Journal of Education Policy*, *23*(2), 135–152. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930701853062

Smyth, G. (2014). Coaching Desistance? Life Coaching for Offenders in a "Who Works" Environment. *Probation Journal*, *61*(4), 365–380. https://doi.org/10.1177/0264550514548255

Staff, S. (2016). The Challenges of Prisoner Re-Entry Into Society. School of Social Work, preuzeto sa https://socialwork. simmons. edu/blog/PrisonerReentry.

Stearns, A. E., Swanson, R., & Etie, S. (2019). The walking dead? Assessing social death among long-term prisoners. Corrections, 4(3), 153-168.

Sun, S., Crooks, N., Kemnitz, R., & Westergaard, R. P. (2018). Reentry experiences of

> Black men living with HIV/AIDS after release from prison: Intersectionality and

> implications for care. *Social Science & Medicine*, *211*, 78–86.

> https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.06.003

Taylor, R. J., Miller, R., Mouzon, D., Keith, V. M., & Chatters, L. M. (2018).

> Everyday discrimination among African American men: The impact of criminal

> justice contact. Race and Justice, 8(2), 154-177.

> https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368716661849

The BIPOC project. The BIPOC Project. (n.d.). https://www.thebipocproject.org/

Thornton, D. G. (2018). *The effects of institutional discrimination on the successful*

> *reentry of justice-impacted*[Doctoral Dissertation].

> https://hdl.handle.net/10657.1/1415

Tuttle, C. (2019). Snapping back: Food stamp bans and criminal recidivism. American

> Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 11(2), 301-27.

Umeh, P. (2019). The use of life coaching in managing patients with chronic persistent

> mental health disorders to improve physical and mental wellbeing (27545709)

> [Doctoral Dissertation, Azusa Pacific University]. ProQuest Dissertations

> Publishing.

United States Census Bureau (2020). African American males: Sex by age (Black or

> African American males alone). Retrieved from

> https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=African%20American%20males&hidePrev

> iew=false&tid=DECENNIALSF12010.PCT12B&t=Black%20or%20African%20

> American&vintage=2010

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019). Labor force statistics from the current
population survey. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/cps/

US Legal, Inc. (n.d.). *Find a legal form in minutes*. Legal Definitions Legal Terms
Dictionary | USLegal, Inc. https://definitions.uslegal.com/

Vil, C. S. (2019). Black Male Mental Health and Prison. In Black Males and the Criminal
Justice System (pp. 73-84). Routledge.

Von Bergen, C. W., & Bressler, M. S. (2016). " Ban the Box" gives justice-impacted a
fresh start in securing employment. Labor Law Journal, *67*(2), 383.
Wagner, P., & Rabuy, B. (2017). Mass incarceration: The whole pie 2017. Prison
Policy Initiative, 119, 1-23.

Wagner, P., & Rabuy, B. (n.d.). *Mass incarceration: The whole pie 2017*. Mass
Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2017 | Prison Policy Initiative.
https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2017.html

Wildeman, C., & Wang, E. A. (2017). Mass incarceration, public health, and widening
inequality in the USA. *The Lancet, 389*(10077), 1464-1474. doi:10.1016/S0140-
6736(17)30259-3

Westrope, E. (2018). Employment discrimination on the basis of criminal history: Why
an anti-discrimination statute is a necessary remedy. The Journal of Criminal Law
and Criminology, 108(2), 367-398. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48572851

Wright, Kevin N. "The violent and victimized in the male prison." *Journal of Offender
Rehabilitation* 16, no. 3-4 (1991): 1-26.

Zakaria, S. M., Jaafar, J. R., & Lazim, N. H. M. (2018). Employment Issues Among Ex-
Offenders: Difficulties in Securing Employment and Barriers of

Employment. International Journal for Studies on Children, Women, Elderly and

    Disabled, 5.

Zgoba, K. M., & Dayal, N. P. (2015). Recidivism. The Encyclopedia of Crime and

    Punishment, 1-5.

Zhang, A. (2018). Sanctioned Unemployment: The Impact of Occupational Licensing

    Restrictions on Justice-impacted. Washington University Journal of Law &

    Policy, 57, 251.

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT RELEASE

Investigator:

My name is Isreal Moses IV IRBNet ID 1926495, and I am a graduate student at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I have the pleasure of working with my principal investigator Dr. Melissa Krull, and I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate.

This study aims to learn more about the perception of formerly incarcerated Black males on how life skills coaching supported them in overcoming barriers to housing, healthcare, and employment. In the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview with scripted questions. The one-on-one interview will be conducted and recorded via Zoom video conferencing. This will take approximately 60 minutes of your time. All information will be kept confidential. Numbers will be assigned to your responses to assist in maintaining confidentiality.

As a participant, you will receive a $20 Target gift card for the completion of your interview. This information gathered in this study should help us to gain insight into how formerly incarcerated Black men overcome barriers to housing, healthcare, and employment. The risks to you for participating in this study are believed to be minimal social or emotional risks. These risks will be minimized by breaks or discontinuing the interview if any stress or discomfort emerges. If you do not wish to continue, you have the right to withdraw from the study, without penalty, at any time. If you have any concerns, you can contact the principal investigator Dr. ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮@mnsu.edu.

If you have any questions about this research study, contact Isreal Moses IV at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮@gmail.com. If you have any questions about participants' rights and research-related injuries, please contact the Director of the Institutional Review Board, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, or irb@mnsu.edu

Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Participant - All my questions and concerns about this study have been addressed. I choose, voluntarily, to participate in this research project. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

_____

print the name of the participant

_____

signature of participant   date

Isreal Moses IV IRBNet ID 1926495

print the name of the investigator

_____

signature of investigator   date

Appendix B

September 29, 2022

Dear Isreal,

I appreciate your interest in conducting your research with participants at Better Futures Minnesota. Our men have a unique environment conducive to the type of research you're looking to do. Our participants, including the men in Phase III and IV, are housed at our downtown location. I believe this will create an easier process for the men to participate.

Please consider this letter your formal approval to conduct your study and utilize our facilities if needed. I look forward to reviewing the outcomes.

Kindly,

Director of Integrated Care Team
Better Futures Minnesota
2620 Minnehaha Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55407
Email:
Phone