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HELPING OTHERS AS A RESPONSE TO RECONCILE A CRIMINAL PAST

The Role of the Wounded Healer in Prisoner Reentry Programs

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Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the staff members working for prisoner reentry programs are formerly incarcerated persons. Moreover, criminologists have written that the strengths-based role of the "wounded healer" or "professional ex-" is exemplified by released prisoners who desist from a deviant career by replacing it with an occupation as a paraprofessional, lay therapist, or counselor. Despite these observations, there is a paucity of research about formerly incarcerated persons employed by agencies that provide reentry-related programming. This study begins to fill this gap by examining whether, how, and why the staff members of prisoner reentry programs differ from the clients. Characteristics of formerly incarcerated persons thought to be related to desistance and reconciling a criminal past such as overcoming stigma, prosocial attitudes and beliefs, active coping strategies, psychological well-being, and satisfaction with life are examined. Findings support the notion that the wounded healer or professional ex- role is related to desistance and can potentially transform formerly incarcerated persons from being part of "the problem" into part of "the solution" to reduce crime and recidivism.

Keywords: reentry; desistance; mutual-help; peer support; redemption; reconciliation

> Most of the program staff themselves, often the directors, are ex-convicts . . . This type of career is very popular among prisoners and ex-prisoners.
>
> —Irwin (2005, p. 178)

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Many prisoners and former prisoners express a desire to receive mentoring from formerly incarcerated persons who are "making it" in conventional society (e.g., Erickson, Crow, Zurcher, & Connett, 1973; Richie, 2001). Recently, researchers have begun to recognize a coping strategy among recovering substance users and formerly incarcerated persons involving becoming a "professional ex-" (Brown, 1991) or a "wounded healer" (Arrigo & Takahashi, 2006; Jackson, 2001; LeBel, 2007; Maruna, 2001; White, 2000). Brown (1991) asserts that it is important to consider how one might "adopt a legitimate career premised upon an identity that embraces one's deviant history" (p. 220). Although it is impossible to measure the true extent of the wounded healer or professional ex-phenomenon, Maruna (2001) argues that "the desisting self-narrative frequently involves reworking a delinquent history into a source of wisdom to be drawn from while acting as a drug counselor, youth worker, community volunteer, or mutual-help group member" (p. 117).

Today, there is limited empirical investigation of the extent and possible benefits of helpgiving in populations of prisoners and former prisoners (but see Bazemore & Karp, 2004; Maruna, LeBel, & Lanier, 2003). Recent research about formerly incarcerated persons has examined their interest and engagement in helping others (LeBel, 2007), peer support roles (Bellamy, Rowe, Benedict, & Davidson, 2012), their role as "life coaches" (Schinkel & Whyte, 2012), and fathers as "unaffiliated" wounded healers assisting incarcerated sons (Halsey & Deegan, 2012). This article builds on theory and research concerning the helper therapy principle, mutual-help groups, wounded healers, retroflexive reformation, and reconciliation to examine the potential benefits of this sort of employment or career in the desistance process of formerly incarcerated staff members and clients in prisoner reintegration programs.

THE WOUNDED HEALER: THEORY, HISTORY, AND EVIDENCE

In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers (most notably Cressey, 1955, 1965), began to outline the theoretical and practical reasons why former prisoners should be recruited and trained to work as practitioners in the rehabilitation of other offenders. Cressey (1955) called this process "retroflexive reformation" and argued that "in attempting to reform others, the [offender] almost automatically . . . identifies himself closely with other persons engaging in reformation, and assigns status on the basis of anticriminal behavior" (p. 119). Similarly, Riessman (1965) developed the "helper therapy principle," which calls attention to possible benefits the "helper receives from being in the helper role" (p. 32). This principle simply states that it may be more reintegrative to give help than to receive it because "those who help are helped most" (Gartner & Riessman, 1984, p. 19).

Riessman's (1965) helper therapy principle and Cressey's (1955) retroflexive reformation principle were implemented in several programs in the 1960s, including Grant and Grant's (1975; see also Pearl & Riessman, 1965) New Careers Development Program. The central premise of the New Careers Movement was that disadvantaged individuals (including former prisoners) could be trained and placed in entry-level social service jobs and could take advantage of their life experiences as well as their geographic, cultural, and functional similarities to help similar persons in need. Empey (1968) noted that a remarkable aspect of the New Careers Development Program "is in the notion that a *career* in corrections might be the objective of the correctional experience, at least for some offenders" (p. 19). Although the original New Careers programs and the use of formerly

incarcerated persons in formal helping roles in corrections have largely disappeared, the movement has had a lasting impact, fundamentally changing the way we think about professionals and clients in social work, mental health, and even criminal justice.

Stephen Fraley (2001), serving a long prison sentence for a violent offense, argues that "seeking reconciliation is not for wimps" (p. 67), and remarks that "I feel great fear of rejection or ostracism" (p. 67). Fraley (2001) posits that it can be very difficult for criminal offenders to reconcile with victims. Due to this limitation, offenders often make amends in other aspects of their life and the lives of others (Fraley, 2001). For example, the "lifers" in Liem and Richardson's (2014) study realized it was unlikely they would be able to make amends with their victims directly, and instead focused their efforts on mentoring at-risk youth to prevent them from following in their footsteps.

Maruna and LeBel (2009) suggest that perhaps the primary challenge facing the returning prisoner is the need to prove him or herself to be worthy of forgiveness. Without this forgiveness or redemption, there may be little hope for finding a meaningful role in the prosocial world. Eglash (1957, 1977) argues that the process of redemption involves individuals going a "second mile" or what he refers to as "creative restitution": making up for one's wrong-doing by working to help others, specifically other prisoners or those at risk of going to prison. Maruna and LeBel (2009; see also Aresti, Eatough, & Brooks-Gordon, 2010; LeBel, 2012) posit that these strengths-based efforts work primarily as a form of stigma management or reverse labeling (Braithwaite, 1989). Thus, strengths-based activities, such as becoming a professional ex- or wounded healer, can allow stigmatized individuals to overcome their labels and reconcile with society for their past crimes.

In what Bazemore (1999) calls "earned redemption," strengths-based practices treat offenders as community assets to be utilized "rather than merely liabilities to be supervised" (Travis, 2000, p. 7). In the course of data collection for this study, several staff members expressed that "this is the only job where my criminal record is viewed as an asset." Lofland (1969; see also Aresti et al., 2010; Maruna, 2001) notes that this sort of helper/wounded healer career role "serves to make acceptable, explicable and even meritorious the guilt-laden, 'wasted' portions of an Actor's life" (p. 287).

Several characteristics describe the helper/wounded healer role orientation for formerly incarcerated persons. White, Boyle, and Loveland (2004) argue that "the centerpiece of all successful recovery mutual-aid groups is the process of sharing experience, strength, and hope" (p. 246; see also Bellamy et al., 2012; Silverman, 2013). Self-help group participants often emphasize that their expertise comes from "having been there too" (Humphreys, 2004, p. 15), and that they have gained valuable knowledge and skills from these experiences that can be shared with others to improve their lives (Maruna, 2001; see also Irwin, 2005). In its most general form, then, a wounded healer orientation involves the desire and commitment to "reach back" and help other similarly stigmatized people make it in the world (see Halsey & Deegan, 2012; LeBel, 2007; Maruna, 2001; White, 2000). This is often accomplished by sharing one's experiences, strength, and hope; acting as a role model; mentoring others; and, for some, making a career of helping others who are not as far along in the recovery and/or reintegration process. Moreover, prior research on narratives of desistance has found that a characteristic that distinguishes between successfully and unsuccessfully reformed ex-prisoners is the individual's engagement in mentoring, parenting, and

other "generative" activities designed to "give something back" to others in his or her community (Halsey, 2008; Marsh, 2011; Maruna, 2001; Vaughan, 2007).

In addition, the characteristics and role of the wounded healer in the desistance process is consistent with several of the Central Eight risk/need factors of the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model (D. A. Andrews & Bonta, 2010), such as reduced antisocial cognitions and fewer antisocial associates, a supportive work situation, and being actively engaged in recovery from substance abuse. Similarly, elements of the Good Lives Model (GLM; Ward & Gannon, 2006), such as a sense of agency, the importance of personal identity, and a sense of meaning in purpose in one's life are consistent with the role of the wounded healer. Furthermore, Liem and Richardson (2014) argue that a sense of agency "is an important element of the redemption narrative in desisting from crime" (p. 15).

The purported benefits of assuming the role of helper include the reinforcement of personal learning, increased feelings of interpersonal competence, a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, improved self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, and social approval (see, for example, Aresti et al., 2010; Brown, 1991; Jackson, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Riessman, 1990). Moreover, Jackson (2001) argues that "the very ministering to others has health-enhancing effects on the healer" (p. 30). Research supports these assertions as studies of mutual-help groups find that engaging in the helping role is related to better psychosocial adjustment and treatment outcomes (Silverman, 2013; Zemore, Kaskutas, & Ammon, 2004), as well as higher self-esteem and self-worth (e.g., Aresti et al., 2010). Overall, general population surveys find that helping others is strongly related to one's psychological health and that "one does well by doing good" (Piliavin, 2003, p. 227). Although more research is needed to confirm these benefits for formerly incarcerated persons, it is consistent with research on help-giving behaviors in the literature around criminality (e.g., Aresti et al., 2010; Maruna, 2001).

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are to examine the "professional ex-" or formal wounded healer role of formerly incarcerated persons, and to assess whether engagement in this strengths-based role works as a stigma management strategy, enhances psychological well-being and satisfaction with life, and acts as a sort of buffer against criminality. Specifically, four research questions are addressed:

Research Question 1: Do formerly incarcerated persons working as staff members at reintegration programs differ from clients in terms of demographics and background characteristics?

Research Question 2: Do staff members differ from clients in regard to perceptions of stigma for themselves personally and against former prisoners more generally?

Research Question 3: Do staff differ from clients in attitudes, beliefs, and coping strategies?

Research Question 4: Do staff differ from clients in their psychological well-being and satisfaction with life right now?

Based on the extant literature, it is hypothesized that the wounded healer role will assist formerly incarcerated persons in reconciling a criminal past, and will be positively related to the following: perceiving less personal stigma; prosocial attitudes and beliefs, coping in more active ways; psychological well-being; and satisfaction with life.

METHOD

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

In this study, a formerly incarcerated person is defined as someone who has served a prison sentence for a felony conviction. A purposive and targeted sampling technique was used to recruit male and female formerly incarcerated persons from New York City and Upstate New York. Sampling was aimed at recruiting adults, aged 18 and above, who were currently receiving prisoner reintegration services of some kind, or working as a staff member (i.e., as a counselor, employment specialist, halfway house manager, etc.) for the organization. A total of 258 formerly incarcerated persons completed the survey; 229 clients and 29 staff members. Participants were recruited from six organizations providing a variety of services (e.g., counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, education, and employment services) to former prisoners. Female formerly incarcerated persons were oversampled for this project.

This is a cross-sectional study, and the method of data collection is a self-completed questionnaire that was delivered to groups of former prisoner clients at each of the organizations, and to staff members individually. Data collection was overseen by the first author and completed between April and September, 2004. The questionnaire asked about a variety of topics concerning life as a formerly incarcerated person, including perceptions of stigma, social identity as a former prisoner, coping strategies, psychological well-being, demographics, and criminal history. The questionnaire primarily utilized a fixed-choice "closed" format with response sets ranging from five to eight items. The majority of participants completed the questionnaire in 30 min or less. Approval for the study was obtained from the University of Albany's Institutional Review Board and senior-level personnel (e.g., executive director) at each of the organizations.

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

Given the exploratory nature of this study and constraints imposed by small numbers, primarily descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses are presented. Differences are examined using independent-samples *t* tests to compare staff and clients on ordinally or intervally scaled variables (e.g., age and personal stigma). Chi-square (χ^2) analyses were used to compare staff and clients on categorical variables (e.g., sex and employment status).

MEASURES

Staff and Client Characteristics

Demographic information including age, sex, and racial/ethnic identity was collected. Racial/ethnic identity is dichotomized into Black non-Hispanic and all Others. The variable for married is dichotomized with 1 indicating currently married. Education level is operationalized by the highest level of formal education completed, and is dichotomized with those completing some college or more coded as 1. The measure for employment is a dichotomous variable with 1 indicating currently employed full-time or part-time. Criminal history was measured in several ways: number of felony convictions and prison time served in lifetime, any violent felony convictions, and current community supervision status. Each of these measures involves self-report.

Stigma

Respondents were asked for their perceptions of what "people" think about them personally as well as all former prisoners generally (as a group), because of the status as a former prisoner. Items were modified from Link's (1987) devaluation-discrimination scale for persons with mental illness and Harvey's (2001) scale concerning stigma and race. In addition, several new items were developed (see LeBel, 2012). The matching set of nine indicators include many of the stereotypes of formerly incarcerated persons (e.g., dangerous, dishonest, untrustworthy) as well as indicators for being feared, discriminated against, being looked down on, and so on. A 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was used for these stigma measures, and all measures described below, unless a different response set is specified. Including all respondents, Cronbach's alpha coefficient[1] for the general/group stigma scale is .859, whereas it is .874 for the personal stigma scale.

To examine recent experiences of being stigmatized, respondents were asked, "During the last three months or since you've been out of prison if that is less than three months, do you feel that you have been treated negatively because you're a former prisoner?" This variable is dichotomized with those reporting "often," "very often," or "all of the time" coded as 1 and all other responses coded as 0. To measure the perception of the stability of stigmatization, individuals were asked to respond to the statement, "Society will never fully accept that former prisoners have paid their debt to society." To assess the impact of stigmatization on respondent's perception of leading a successful life, they were asked, "Overall, how hard is it for you to succeed in life because of the way people in society view former prisoners?" A 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (not at all hard to succeed) to 5 (very hard to succeed) was used.

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Coping Strategies

The wounded healer orientation emphasizes a more informal role to make it a possibility for former prisoners with only a few weeks back in society. Four indicators were used to create a scale measuring this construct: sharing experiences, acting as a role model, mentoring others, and interest in pursuing a career to help others (see LeBel, 2007). Higher scores indicate a greater sense of thinking of oneself as a wounded healer, and this scale has an alpha of .736. The advocacy/activism orientation indicates support for and/or involvement in activities to change the public's (negative) perception and treatment of prisoners and former prisoners. The three indicators (e.g., "I'm currently trying to change the way that prisoners and former prisoners are treated in society") were worded so that recently released prisoners could respond to each statement (LeBel, 2009). Higher scores translate into a stronger inclination for advocacy-related activity, and this scale has an alpha of .634.

To assess the use of avoidance of law-abiding individuals as a coping strategy, respondents were asked to answer the statement, "I avoid getting close to people who haven't been in prison." Regret/remorse was measured by asking participants to respond to the statement, "I am sorry for the harm caused to others by my past criminal activities." To assess the perceived legitimacy of the criminal justice system, respondents were asked if "unjust laws have put many people in prison." The criminal attitude of offenders has been measured in a wide variety of ways (see Brodsky & Smitherman, 1983 for a review). In this study, a scale with three items is used to measure pro-criminal attitudes (e.g., "To get ahead in the world you may have to do some things that are illegal"). Higher scores translate into a more

criminal attitude, and this scale has an alpha of .641. Self-esteem was measured by using the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem scale, and this scale has an alpha of .792.

TABLE 1: Comparison of Client and Staff Characteristics

Characteristic	Clients *M (SD)*	Staff *M (SD)*
Age (years)	36.14 (9.68)	42.59 (6.67)***
Sex (male)	84.7%	62.1%**
Black, non-Hispanic (yes)	57.9%	51.7%
Married (yes)	20.4%	37.9%*
Education – Some college or more (yes)	28.9%	58.6%***
Working full-time or part-time (yes)	28.3%	100%***
Violent criminal conviction (yes)	40.6%	50.0%
Felony convictions	2.18 (1.02)	2.04 (1.00)
Prison time served (months)	87.23 (71.42)	118.64 (93.10)*
Community supervision—currently (yes)	67.6%	30.8%***

†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Participants were also asked to forecast the likelihood that they personally, as well as the average prisoner, "will be arrested for a new crime in the next three years (or in the first three years) after release from prison?" (see, for example, Dhami, Mandel, Loewenstein, & Ayton, 2006). A 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*very unlikely to get arrested*) to 5 (*very likely to get arrested*) was used.

Current Satisfaction With Life

Six items were used to assess formerly incarcerated persons' current satisfaction with life and quality of their social bonds. Respondents were asked to indicate "how you feel about" several areas: your life as a whole; your employment situation; and the way things are in general between you and your close relatives, you and your children, the relationship with your partner, and the amount of friendship in your life. The satisfaction with life variables were constructed using Andrews and Whitney's (1976) 7-point scale from 1 (*terrible*) to 7 (*delighted*). A response for "does not apply to me" was included for these measures.

RESULTS

Table 1 provides a comparison of formerly incarcerated persons as staff members and clients for select demographics, criminal history, and other background characteristics. Although the sample size and unequal subgroup sizes limited the ability to detect statistically significant differences, formerly incarcerated staff members were significantly older than the clients (42.6 and 36.1, respectively), $t(252) = 3.48$, $p < .001$, and more likely to be women (37.9% vs. 15.3%), $\chi^2(1, 258) = 9.01$, $p = .003$.[2] Slightly more than half of the staff members and clients are Black non-Hispanic, whereas staff members are more likely to be currently married (37.9% vs. 20.4%). More than half (58.6%) of the staff members have completed some college or more as compared with 28.9% of the clients, and less than one third (28.3%) of the clients reported currently working either full- or part-time. On average, staff members have served more prison time than clients, and are much less likely to be currently under community supervision.

TABLE 2: Comparison of Client and Staff Perceptions of Stigma due to Status as a Former Prisoner

Perceptions	Clients *M (SD)*	Staff *M (SD)*
General (group) stigma	4.68 (1.11)	4.38 (0.92)
Personal stigma	3.79 (1.31)	2.98 (1.00)***
Recent experiences treated negatively—often or more (yes)	39.1%	19.2%*
Debt to society—will never be fully paid	5.50 (1.34)	4.86 (1.64)*
Difficulty to succeed in life because of the way people view former prisoners	2.87 (1.16)	2.39 (1.07)*

†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

TABLE 3: Comparison of Client and Staff Attitudes, Beliefs, and Coping Strategies

Attitudes	Clients *M (SD)*	Staff *M (SD)*
Wounded healer	5.32 (1.21)	6.38 (0.44)***
Advocacy/activism	4.76 (1.31)	5.87 (0.84)***
Avoid getting close to non-former prisoners	2.30 (1.44)	1.76 (0.79)*
Criminal attitude	2.66 (1.39)	1.97 (0.85)**
Regret/remorse	5.74 (1.70)	6.17 (1.37)
Unjust laws put many people in prison	5.69 (1.45)	5.21 (1.88)†
Self-esteem	5.44 (0.95)	5.75 (0.92)†
Forecast of rearrest (self)	2.08 (1.09)	1.48 (0.99)**
Forecast of rearrest (average released prisoner)	3.91 (0.80)	3.72 (0.84)

Note. Indicators for the first seven items are scored using a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, whereas the scale for the forecast of rearrest has a range from 1 = *very unlikely to get arrested* to 5 = *very likely*.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 2 indicates client and staff perceptions of stigma due to their status as a former prisoner. The mean of the general stigma scale did not differ between clients and staff members. However, staff members are much less likely than clients to perceive being personally stigmatized (2.98 vs. 3.79), $t(254) = 3.22$, $p < .001$, or to have often been treated negatively, recently, due to being a former prisoner (19.2% vs. 39.1%), $\chi^2(1, 228) = 3.91$, $p = .048$. Moreover, staff members are less likely to report that "society will never fully accept that former prisoners have paid their debt to society" (4.86 vs. 5.50), and less likely to think that it will be hard to succeed in life because of the way people in society view former prisoners (2.39 vs. 2.87).

Findings presented in Table 3 show how staff members and clients differ in attitudes, beliefs, and coping strategies to deal with being a former prisoner. Staff members are more likely to think of themselves as wounded healers (6.38 vs. 5.32), $t(253) = 4.67$, $p < .001$, and to be interested or engaged in advocacy-related activities to change the way that returning prisoners are viewed and treated (5.87 vs. 4.76), $t(253) = 4.45$, $p < .001$. Staff members were less likely to indicate that they "avoid getting close to people who haven't been in prison." They had significantly lower scores than clients on the criminal attitudes scale, and were less likely to think that "unjust laws have put many people in prison." The self-esteem of staff members was marginally higher than clients, whereas regret/remorse did not differ. Finally, staff members reported that they were less likely to get arrested in the next 3 years (1.48 vs. 2.08), $t(254) = 2.82$, $p = .005$.

TABLE 4: Comparison of Client and Staff Satisfaction With Life Right Now

Satisfaction with . . .	Clients *M (SD)*	Staff *M (SD)*
Life as a whole	4.38 (1.19)	5.41 (1.24)***
Employment situation	3.21 (1.71)	6.03 (1.12)***
Relationship with close relatives	4.85 (1.59)	5.86 (1.13)***
Relationship with children	4.73 (1.71)	5.50 (1.30)*
Relationship with partner	4.68 (1.85)	5.42 (1.45)†
Amount of friendship	4.80 (1.42)	5.55 (1.12)**

Note. Indicators are scored using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *terrible* to 7 = *delighted*.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4 displays that formerly incarcerated staff members are more satisfied with their life right now as compared with clients. In particular, staff members are much more satisfied with their life as a whole, employment situation, and relationship with close relatives (all *p*s < .001). Staff members are also more satisfied with the amount of friendship in their life, and the relationship with both children and partners. The mean for each satisfaction with life item for the staff members is above 5.40, where 5 indicates *pleased* and 6 represents *mostly satisfied*.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to assess the professional ex- or wounded healer role of formerly incarcerated persons by examining potential differences between staff members and clients in prisoner reentry programs. Based on existing research, it was hypothesized that a current wounded healer role will assist formerly incarcerated persons in reconciling a criminal past, and will be positively related to perceiving less personal stigma, prosocial attitudes and beliefs, active coping strategies, psychological well-being, and satisfaction with life. Each of these relationships was supported in this study.

Staff members were much less likely than clients to perceive being personally stigmatized by society. This finding is important as it suggests that employment as a wounded healer may act as a management strategy to combat stigma and exclusion (Maruna & LeBel, 2009). When compared with the staff, clients were more likely to report that their debt to society will never be repaid and that it will be harder to succeed in life because of society's perception of former prisoners. Moreover, staff members were much less likely to report that they will get arrested in the next 3 years, but did not differ in their forecast of arrest for the average released prisoner. Therefore, the professional exes appear to have undergone a remarkable change in their self-identities and worldviews. This change—best understood as "hope"—may be a product of personal redemption and second mile efforts to make amends for one's actions by helping others, and appears to be related to desistance from crime (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2008).

A popular idiom states that "actions speak louder than words." The staff members certainly appear to be "walking the walk" versus just "talking the talk." Staff members were more supportive and/or engaged in both helping others to succeed after prison and advocacy-related activities to change the way that returning prisoners are viewed and treated in society. Each of these active coping mechanisms was previously found to be positively related to the psychological well-being of clients (LeBel, 2007, 2009). Bazemore (1999) argues that engagement with helping behaviors can send a message to the wider community

that an individual is worthy of further support and investment in their reintegration, and thus help formerly incarcerated persons shed the negative connotations of the "ex-convict" identity. Moreover, research on interpersonal forgiveness indicates that reparative acts by those who have caused harm are among the most effective "signals" that individuals can send out to indicate to others that they are worthy of forgiveness (McCullough, 2008). Overall, there is a growing consensus that empowerment-oriented, proactive, and collective attempts to change public perceptions and create a more positive identity are increasingly being thought to be stigmatized persons' "most effective and enduring route to reducing prejudice" (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002, p. 217; see also Arrigo & Takahashi, 2006).

Consistent with prior research, more than half (58.2%) of the clients agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to pursue a wounded healer career of some kind (Irwin, 2005; Maruna, 2001). These findings suggest that there "may be a natural tendency to help and serve others that characterizes a significant portion of the incarcerated population" (Bazemore & Karp, 2004, p. 29).

The staff members do not appear to be engaged in helping others for the money, as few (19.2%) reported income of more than US$2,500 per month despite the fact that the vast majority (86.2%) are working full-time. This finding might indicate that formerly incarcerated persons are stuck in low-paying positions due to few other viable options for employment, the lack of credentials or skills for promotions, or a "razor-ribbon ceiling" of sorts. Cressey's (1955; see also Maruna, 2001) retroflexive reformation principle argues that offenders engaged in reforming other offenders will have more prosocial attitudes, and possibly be less likely to recidivate. The findings that staff members perceive laws to be less unjust than the clients, and have much lower scores on both the criminal attitude scale and the forecast of arrest for themselves, suggests that former prisoners can form positive, prosocial relationships with their peers and can be good role models for others (see De Leon, 2000, about the "positive peer culture" in Therapeutic Communities). However, Petersilia (2003) reports that the majority of states require "no association with persons with criminal records" as a condition of parole supervision (p. 83). Based on the potential benefits of prosocial peer groups for released prisoners, correctional administrators should consider changing these no-contact policies. Why differential association among prisoners and former prisoners cannot be reversed to emphasize the potential positive aspects of mutual-aid groups and mentorship has rarely been raised since Cressey (1955) first introduced the idea of retroflexive reformation.

The literature on peer support and the wounded healer orientation suggested that staff members would have higher self-esteem and be more satisfied with their lives (Jackson, 2001; Zemore et al., 2004). Each of these hypotheses was supported. Involvement in wounded healer-related employment assisting other recently released prisoners might improve staff members' satisfaction with life and self-esteem by giving their life purpose, meaning, and significance (see, for example, Maruna, 2001). These findings also suggest that the staff members have "made good" in their relationships by reconciling with family and friends.

CONCLUSION

Prisoner reintegration programs appear to be increasing the use of formerly incarcerated persons as staff (Re-Entry Policy Council, 2005). Yet, we know little about the appeal and impact of these programs and relationships on their clients and workers. The findings reported here suggest that becoming a wounded healer should be recognized for its potential

in facilitating the successful reintegration of some formerly incarcerated persons. However, there is the potential for selection bias as more motivated individuals may be more likely to want (and have the ability) to be employed as wounded healers rather than the factors discussed necessarily occurring as a function of the role. Thus, establishing the generalizability of the findings from this study, or the lack thereof, is a priority for future research.

The lack of research on mutual aid organizations, self-help groups, and mentoring among prisoners and formerly incarcerated persons is startling considering how much research is funded each year to examine the impact of interventions to reduce recidivism. Moving forward, longitudinal research combining qualitative and quantitative methods is needed to provide a more in-depth examination of how and why formerly incarcerated persons turn an avocation into a vocation, and how this process may assist their own (and clients) reentry and reconciliation. Future research can also examine job tenure and promotion of formerly incarcerated persons in prisoner reentry organizations.

Johnson (2002) argues that reintegration requires "a mutual effort at reconciliation, where offender and society work together to make amends—for hurtful crimes and hurtful punishments—and move forward" (p. 328). Strengths-based approaches to reentry start from precisely this perspective with the goal of assisting formerly incarcerated persons' transformation from being part of "the problem" into part of "the solution" as they reach back to increase the likelihood that other released prisoners will "make it" in a law-abiding way in society (see Maruna et al., 2003; Riessman, 1990). If helping others has adaptive consequences, then an argument can be made to make opportunities to engage in reciprocal processes of mutual support more widely available to former prisoners. In addition, to create more professional exes, policies can be developed to reduce legal restrictions to employment for felons, and to provide monetary support to promote the completion of certification programs (e.g., substance abuse counseling) and college degrees (e.g., criminal justice). The goal of a strengths-based correctional approach (see LeBel, 2007; Maruna & LeBel, 2009), like the New Careers Movement before it, would be to "devise ways of creating more helpers" (Riessman, 1965, p. 28).

NOTES

1. An alpha coefficient higher than .70 is considered to be an acceptable level of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Although two scales have an alpha slightly below this threshold, Schmitt (1996) argues that "there is no sacred level of acceptable or unacceptable level of alpha" (p. 353), and that scales with lower levels of reliability may be quite useful. However, interpretation of constructs with lower reliability has "the potential for underestimating any relationships between the measured variable and other variables of interest" (Schmitt, 1996, p. 352).

2. For the entire sample, as compared with men, women are significantly (at $p < .05$) older, have served less prison time, and are less likely to have a violent felony conviction or to be on community supervision. Women also scored significantly higher on the wounded healer and advocacy scales, and reported lower forecasts of arrest for themselves and the average prisoner. There were no differences between women and men for any perceptions of stigma or satisfaction with life items.

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