

The Effects of Labeling and Stereotype Threat on Offender Reintegration

by

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

Master's of Arts in Criminology

in

The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities

Criminology

University of Ontario Institute of Technology

May 2011

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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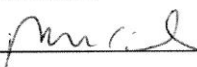
Master of Arts in Criminology

Date of Defence: **2011/05/24**

Thesis title: The Effects of Labeling and Stereotype Threat on Offender Reintegration

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Abstract

After their release from prison, offenders are faced with many hardships that hinder their reintegration efforts. Often, offenders are stereotyped and face community exclusion due to their criminal record. Much of the literature on reintegration has focused on the way in which society stereotypes offenders, but not how offenders interpret and internalize these stereotypes. This study examines the way offenders internalize the stereotypes associated with having a criminal record, and how this affects their reintegration. Data was gathered by conducting 18 in-depth interviews with offenders at the John Howard Society in Toronto. The interviews showed that all participants felt that they had been negatively labeled by others based on the fact that they have a criminal record and/or spent time in prison. Additionally, five participants indicated experiencing stereotype threat, and believed this phenomenon to have had a negative impact on their ability to reintegrate back into society.

Keywords: offenders, labeling, reintegration, stereotype threat, employment

Dedication

To my family, for their constant support.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take the time to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Carla Cesaroni, for the constant effort, and time, and dedication that she put into helping me complete this thesis. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Nawal Ammar and Dr. Kimberley Clow for their help in preparing this thesis.

Additionally, I would like to thank my participants. Without their willingness to participate in this study I would not have been able to complete this work and gain further insight into issues surrounding labeling, stereotyping, and offender reintegration. Thank you to each one of them for sharing their experiences with me.

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Introduction

Present Study

The current study attempts to reconcile the criminological literature on reintegration and labeling theory with the psychological literature on stereotype threat in order to determine the ways in which offenders are self-defeating in their reintegration attempts. According to the literature, a study investigating the effect of stereotype threat on offender reintegration has never been conducted before. Therefore, it is important to understand the process by which offenders stigmatize themselves with negative labels, such as ‘criminal’, ‘offender’, ‘parolee’, or ‘ex con’, and the consequences that this internalized stereotype has on the offender’s ability to successfully reintegrate back into society. Therefore, this study will attempt to demonstrate that due to a fear of negative stereotyping offenders fall victim to the effects of stereotype threat and consequently fail in their reintegrative efforts.

In order to understand this phenomenon from the perspective of the offender, 18 released offenders who are regular clients at the John Howard Society of Toronto were interviewed. Interview questions focused on examining the ways offenders viewed themselves, understanding their perception of how society views them, and their experience with stereotype threat. Furthermore, in the interviews it was important to ascertain the offender’s confidence in completing activities that are imperative to the reintegration process, such as filling out a job application or applying for housing. The interviews also explored whether offenders were able to overcome being stereotyped, and if they did, how they were able to do so.

In sum, this research examines the way stereotype threat affects those recently released from prison, and whether or not stereotype threat has a significant impact on their ability to reintegrate successfully into society. In order to achieve this, participants were interviewed about the ways in which they viewed themselves as part of a stereotyped group, how the criminal stereotype had impacted their reintegration efforts, and what, if anything has helped them in overcoming the stereotype.

Labeling Theory

Labeling theory is based on the notion that certain members in society have the ability to construct and apply attributes to other members of the same society (Becker, 1963). The application of a label – often negative – from one societal group to another results in the creation of an ‘other’ and thus the individual or group to which the label has been applied is stigmatized and considered to be outside of conventional society (Akers & Sellers, 2009; Becker, 1963). A pioneer of labeling theory, Becker (1963) stated that deviant behaviour does not exist until it is defined as such by members of society.

Labeling theory is situated within the symbolic interactionist framework which suggests that one’s identity and self-concept are continually defined by interactions with others, and thus only exist based on social interaction (Akers & Sellers). As a result, it can be surmised that those individuals who are negatively labeled will integrate this label into their perception of self. Goffman (1963) believed that those who had been labeled would not act in ways that would contradict the label, but would rather exhibit behaviours that would confirm it. Akers and Sellers (2009) state that once labeled an individual will face embarrassment and disgrace. It is these feelings that will provide motivation for labeled individuals to engage in further acts of deviant behaviour. Therefore, once

labeled, recipients of the label adopt the entailed characteristics as part of their central identity and act in ways that confirm the stereotypes attached to the label, thus confirming its authenticity in the individual.

Labeling and the type of identity construction that it fosters is central to the reintegration process, because it may explain how released offenders will be treated by other members of society and how they will respond to the way they are treated. Offenders may be labeled and stereotyped by other members of society and may internalize the label, thus behaving in ways that confirm the stereotypes or the label (Goffman, 1963; Akers & Sellers, 2009). Psychologists have stated that stereotype threat results from the knowledge of belonging to a stigmatized group, and the fear that one's actions will confirm the stereotype (Wout et al., 2008; Schmader et al., 2008; Cohen & Garcia, 2008). Consequently, offenders are likely to be affected by stereotype threat, as they are aware of the negative connotations associated with the label, and the stigma they face, and they will act to ensure that they conform to society's norms, opposed to this stereotype. This is very important with regards to reintegration as it may be a possible reason for why many offenders are unsuccessful in their reintegration attempts. Not only may offenders act in ways that confirm their membership in a deviant group, but they may suffer the effects of stereotype threat which confirm the label. Thus it is feasible that offenders act in ways that reconfirm the stereotypes associated with the label "criminal" or "offender", and this may make it very hard for offenders to successfully reintegrate back into society.

Offender Stereotypes

From the labels that are applied to offenders, negative stereotypes often arise. These stereotypes often portray offenders as dangerous and undesirable individuals that should be avoided. Typically offenders are also perceived as unhygienic and uneducated (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010). As a result of these negative labels and the stereotyping of offenders, other members of society tend to look down on those who have criminal records and/or have been to prison. This tends to lead to exclusionary practices that ostracizes members of this labeled population and excludes them from legitimate aspects of society (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Link & Phelan, 2001).

Naturally, offenders need to concern themselves with the labels and stereotypes that have been applied to them by other members of society, as they are being placed at a disadvantage due to the application of these negative attributes. The worry and concern about the consequences of the application of these labels and stereotypes to offenders is what could potentially make them vulnerable to stereotype threat.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat is a term used to describe the feelings of inadequacy and resulting poor performance exhibited by an individual who is part of a negatively-stereotyped group (Armenta, 2010; Cohen & Garcia, 2008). Stereotype threat is defined as “the discomfort [individuals] feel when they are at risk of fulfilling a negative stereotype about their group; the apprehension that they could behave in such a way as to confirm the stereotype – in the eyes of others, in their own eyes, or both at the same time,” (Wout, Danso, Jackson, & Spencer, 2008, 729). The current literature on stereotype threat indicates that when an individual belongs to a stereotyped group, they

worry about being typecast and often seek to avoid behaviours or actions that would result in the confirmation of the labels (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Wout, et al., 2008; Cohen & Garcia, 2008). This feeling of worry or anxiety often causes individuals from stereotyped groups to feel stress, which typically results in the individual performing poorly, and often confirming the stereotype that they were attempting to avoid (Wout et al., 2008; Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008). According to the literature, this is a prevalent problem for women and racial minorities (Johns, Inzlicht, and Schmader, 2008; Wout et al., 2008). Most of the literature involves laboratory experiments in which the authors attempted to determine whether or not their participants experienced stereotype threat when completing a math test. Math tests are often used based on two rationales: (1) women are stereotyped as being less mathematically gifted than men, and thus their performance could decrease as a result of stereotype threat (Grimm, Markman, Maddox, & Baldwin, 2009; Rydell, McConnell, & Beilock, 2009); and (2) minority students (specifically African-Americans) are stereotyped as inferior to white students in terms of their intelligence, and thus their school performance could decrease as a result of this stereotype threat (Wout et al., 2008; Armenta, 2010).

Though the current literature does not focus on offenders as a group of individuals who could potentially fall victim to stereotype threat, they are just as likely to be influenced by stereotype threat based upon the offender label and its negative connotations. The fact that stereotype threat may influence the behaviour of offenders is important in terms of their reintegration because it has the potential to provide an explanation for their inability to successfully reintegrate. Offenders face stigmatization and are disadvantaged (Harcel & Klement, 2007; Greve & Enzemann, 2003; Petersilia,

2001b); they are often excluded from housing and certain employment opportunities based on the fact that they possess a criminal record (Graffam et al., 2008; Petersilia, 2001a). It is therefore possible that offenders will not even apply for housing or employment because they believe that they are negatively stereotyped before they even submit an application. Consequently it can be suggested that some offenders are unsuccessful at reintegrating not because they are systematically excluded from society by others, but rather because they are unable to avoid behaving in ways that confirm the stereotype that they are trying to avoid.

Reintegration

The current literature on offender reintegration suggests that offenders face a multitude of issues when they are released from prison. Often the most prevalent problem facing offenders is the lack of social or community bonds; these have typically eroded away over the period of incarceration, and therefore the offender is left to their own devices upon their release (Windzio, 2009; Bales & Mears, 2008; Petersilia, 2001b). Offenders often struggle to find adequate employment (Venard & Hedderman, 2009), which often results from the fact that they have insufficient education, or that they lack job skills (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008; Maguire & Raynor, 2006). In addition, offenders often have trouble finding housing (Petersilia, 2001a; Petersilia, 2001b). All of these factors increase their chances for recidivism, and thus unsuccessful reintegration. Much of the literature discusses the severe lack of funding for offender reintegration programming (Petersilia, 2001b). This absence of reintegrative programming results in a shortage of the parole services available to offenders (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). The current literature suggests that these above-mentioned factors all

contribute to the failure of reintegration, and as a result these factors appear to be the main reasons that many offenders return to prison (Smith & Akers, 1993; Bales & Mears, 2008; Petersilia, 1995).

In addition to these critical reintegrative factors, offenders are often negatively stereotyped. Offenders are believed to be dangerous, lazy, manipulative, troubled, etc., and as a result they are not warmly welcomed back into society. Consequently, offenders are a group of people who could potentially be harmed by stereotype threat because they are a group that is believed to be detrimental to society, and as a result their reintegration will be that much more difficult, as offenders are required to demonstrate to others that they are worthy citizens who are not stereotypical criminals. In order to determine whether this is a prevalent issue within the reintegrating offender population, the theoretical framework of labeling theory will be used in order to examine the ways in which offenders are affected by stereotype threat and how they are able to overcome these adversities and successfully reintegrate.

This thesis examines how labeling and stereotype threat affects offender reintegration. Chapter One provides a review of the relevant literature in order to present the theories associated with this research. Chapter Two discusses the methodology used in order to investigate the phenomenon of labeling and stereotype threat affecting reintegration. Chapter Three presents the results of this study. Chapter Four provides a summary of the main points of this study and highlights the most important findings. Chapter Five discusses the implications of the findings of this study, and makes suggestions for policy implications based on the results of this research.

Literature Review

The following section provides a review of the literature on reintegration, the impact of prison on reintegration, and criminological theory that may be relevant to a complete understanding of reintegration from an offender's point of view. Specifically, this chapter will review the psychological literature on stereotype threat as well as the criminological literature on labeling theory. Currently, no one has attempted to reconcile these two distinct bodies of literature in order to better understand offender reintegration. However, the intent of this review is to demonstrate a link between the reintegrative issues offenders face and their potential to experience stereotype threat.

Labeling Theory as a Method of Applying Stereotype

Individuals who are labeled as deviant tend to feel excluded from conventional society based on the fact that they are considered to be different as a result of their behaviour. Labeling theory relies on the symbolic interactionist perspective. This perspective suggests that "an individual's identity and self-concept, cognitive processes, values, and attitudes are seen only as existing in the context of society acting, reacting, and changing in social interaction with others," (Akers & Sellers, 2009, p.152).

Individuals who feel excluded due to their deviant label will begin to view themselves as deviant, because they will internalize the label which society has applied to them.

Typically, individuals who are labeled as deviant would accept this label as part of their self-identity and act in ways that are congruent with this label (Akers & Sellers, 2009; Goffman, 1963)

In general, labeling theorists assert that when an individual receives a deviant label, this will serve as a reinforcing factor that promotes further deviant behaviour.

Akers and Sellers (2009) state: “the central point of the labeling perspective, then, is that the disgrace suffered by people who are labeled as delinquent or criminal more often encourages than discourages future deviant behaviour,” (p.155). Thus labeled individuals adopt a label as their central identity because they have been embarrassed and excluded from conventional society as a result of the label. This often means that those labeled individuals largely identify with others who have been bestowed a similar label.

Connected to labeling theory is the concept of primary and secondary deviance (Lemert, 1951). The notion of primary and secondary deviance clarifies why the commission of deviant acts increases in labeled individuals. Primary deviance refers to the first deviant act committed by an individual. This action is often the one for which the individual is given a deviant label (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Labeling theorists do not concern themselves much with primary deviance, and they do not offer an explanation for why an individual would choose to commit the original deviant act. It is secondary deviance that is of principle importance to labeling theorists.

Secondary deviance refers to deviance that occurs once an individual has been labeled. This type of deviance is said to occur because the individual has accepted the label as a central part of their identity, and is acting in a manner congruent with this identity (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Lemert also suggests that individuals assume a deviant role once being labeled as such because: “when wayward people experience stigmatizing societal reactions, their world is transformed into one in which their criminal (or deviant) status defines their social existence and self-conception,” (Cullen & Agnew, 2006, p.265). Society stigmatizes the deviant individual through the application of the deviant

label, and thus the deviant adopts this identity due to the symbolic interactionist nature of society.

Labeling theory is of particular importance in the study of reintegration because it has the potential to explain why some offenders fail to reintegrate or recidivate upon their release from prison. Those who have spent time in prison are often referred to as “criminals,” “offenders,” or “parolees” and these terms constitute a deviant label based on a negative stereotype. Each of these labels presents many negative connotations and therefore has a high level of stigma attached to them. Individuals referred to by these terms have effectively been removed from the rest of society by the application of these labels. They are considered to be deviant, undesirable individuals (Frable, 1993; Harcel & Clement, 2007; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; MacLin et al., 2006). Once rejected from society, it is very difficult for these individuals to live by legitimate means. Finding a job or acquiring housing become very difficult because members of conventional society do not want to associate with these labeled individuals (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). In addition, by being excluded from society, these individuals lose the support of their friends and family, and are forced to associate with individuals who have also been stereotyped and segregated from society (Cullen & Agnew, 2006).

The Criminal Stereotype

Research demonstrates that stereotypes are quite prevalent in North American society, and stereotypes are believed to exist in one form or another for most demographic groups (MacLin, & Herrera, 2006). Stereotypes surrounding race and gender are most commonly referred to when discussing the concept of stereotype threat, however, MacLin and Herrera (2006) suggests that there are also commonly-known

stereotypes for different ages (e.g. young and old) as well as for the mentally ill and criminal offenders.

The literature indicates that offenders are a group for whom many stereotypes exist (Frable, 1993; Harcel & Clement, 2007; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; MacLin & Herrera, 2006). According to the literature the public tends to look down on offenders and often consider them to be dangerous individuals. Typically offenders are also perceived as unhygienic, uneducated, and undesirable individuals (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010). Additionally, some of the literature indicated that the stereotypical criminal has a psychological component as well, in that offenders are believed to be mentally ill and dangerous as a result (MacLin, 2006).

From these descriptions it is clear that members of society have created an offender stereotype, and it is likely that members of society use the characteristics of such a stereotype to label any or all offenders. In fact, one of the most common hardships experienced by offenders is negative stereotyping by the community, which often results in labeling, stigmatization, and ostracization (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Link & Phelan, 2001). With respect to reintegration Hirschfield and Piquero (2010) state: “Successful community reentry and the criminological impact of incarceration may depend in part on the attitudes (and consequent reactions) that prisoners encounter [from others] after release” (p. 27). If offenders are welcomed back into the community despite their past criminal transgressions then they are more likely to succeed at reintegration, whereas if they are stereotyped and rejected by the community then it is likely they will fail in their reintegration efforts (Braithwaite, 2000; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Link & Phelan, 2001).

In addition, labeling theory supports the idea that offenders are subject to several negative stereotypes. More often than not offenders are considered to be “irredeemably bad” (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010, p. 30). This is regardless of the crime committed or any other mitigating factors. Because they have been labeled as an offender and all of the negative connotations attributed to that label, they become members of a stereotyped and stigmatized group. In discussing members of stigmatized groups, Carr and Steele (2009) state: “Chronically stigmatized minorities, facing an ongoing and almost ever-present social identity threat spanning many situations may be constantly burdened by identity threat” (p. 858). As a result, it can be assumed that offenders would be required to spend a lot of time managing the negative stereotypes associated with their identities (Akers & Sellers, 2009; Goffman, 1963; MacLin et al., 2006), just as would racial minorities when confronted with stereotypes regarding their intelligence, or women when their mathematical competency is in direct comparison to men.

Release plans often provide offenders with some degree of identity and stigma management to aid them in overcoming negative stereotypes they will encounter once discharged. However, as mentioned previously, lack of funding has affected the availability of these types of supports, and therefore many offenders do not receive any counseling on stigma and identity management (Petersilia, 2001). As a result, offenders attempting to reintegrate are often unprepared for the exclusion and rejection they receive from members of society (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010). This rejection often makes it much more difficult for the offender to find and obtain legitimate means of securing his place in society, such as finding housing or employment. The labels applied to offenders and the subsequent ostracization they fall victim to is a large issue in regard to offender

reintegration. Criminologists often employ labeling theory to explain how offenders are stereotyped in a negative fashion and consequently are stigmatized and excluded from conventional society. This exclusion has the potential to hinder an offender's reintegration efforts, and render their attempts unsuccessful.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat is a fairly recent concept, as the first work on this phenomenon was published in 1995. In this first article Steele and Aronson state that stereotype threat is a phenomenon that results when an individual is at risk to or worried about conforming to a negative stereotype. From this, the authors make “the assumption that performance suffers when the situation redirects attention needed to perform a task onto some other concern – in the case of stereotype threat, a concern with the significance of one's performance in light of a devaluing stereotype” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p.798). Therefore, stereotype threat is a concern of stigmatized individuals, whereby these individuals are worried about exhibiting behaviours that could confirm the negative group stereotype and that these concerns in fact lead individuals to do what they were trying to avoid: Acting in ways that confirm the stereotype. This is likely because the necessary attention and concentration normally used in the execution of the desired behaviour or task, is diverted away from performance. Instead it is diverted to identity management (Goffman, 1963) and the resulting stress or worry that arises regarding conforming to the stereotype. As a result, these individuals perform poorly at the intended behaviour or task because they do not have the needed attention and concentration to be successful, and consequently end up confirming the stereotype to which they were trying so hard to avoid.

In addition to the ideas presented by Steele and Aronson are those presented by Schmader, Johns, and Forbes (2008) who suggest that upon feeling threatened by a stereotype, an individual's behaviour is disrupted through "(a) a physiological stress response that directly impairs prefrontal processing, (b) a tendency to actively monitor performance, and (c) efforts to suppress negative thoughts and emotions in the service of self-regulation" (p. 336). The authors argue that any of these three mechanisms in singular would have the potential to alter a person's performance on a task, but that in combination they almost certainly guarantee failure, and thus they allow the phenomenon of stereotype threat to occur in a stigmatized person.

In addition to the biological and psychological processes which contribute to stereotype threat are issues with emotion regulation, which Johns, Inzlicht, and Schmader (2008) suggest has a large effect on an individual's ability to perform well on a behaviour or a task. They suggest that when an individual encounters stereotype threat they will feel anxious and potentially nervous (John et al., 2008). Several articles suggest that individuals experiencing stereotype threat will attempt to suppress their emotions in order to perform better; however this often has the opposite effect (John et al., 2008; Schmader et al., 2008; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997). Performance is compromised due to the individual's diverted attention and diverted cognitive resources. It has also been suggested that those who have internalized the stereotype surrounding the stereotyped group to which they belong will be more prone to an emotional response when confronted with the stereotype (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Quiamzade & Croizet, 2007). These individuals will feel heightened anxiety responses because they view the threat not only impacts the group to which they belong, but also personally threatening.

Though several authors suggest that the anxiety felt by those experiencing stereotype threats is negative and contributes to poor behavioural or task performance, there are also several authors who suggest that the anxiety felt by these individuals actually serves to help them. For example, Cohen and Garcia (2008) suggest that those who have stigmatizing identities are constantly vigilant to threats and negative treatment. When confronted with a threat the individual must evaluate whether or not they wish to deal with the threat or avoid it. They suggest that those who confront threats tend to increase their performance, whereas those who avoid threats tend to maintain low performance (Cohen & Garcia, 2008). Therefore the anxiety in these situations can serve to help the stereotype threatened individuals by providing them with sufficient motivation to face the stereotype and overcome it. They therefore no longer have to contend with these feelings of anxiety. Moreover, some authors have found that stereotype threat itself can yield productive results for those who are experiencing the threat and attempting to overcome it, but only in certain circumstances and contexts, depending on how the stereotype threat is presented (Armenta, 2010; Grimm, Markman, Maddox, & Baldwin, 2009; Seibt & Forster, 2004) .

Support for this theory is evident in an experiment conducted by Grimm, et al. (2009). The authors hypothesized that “stereotype threat effects emerge from a prevention focus combined with tasks that have an explicit or implicit gains reward structure” (Grimm et al., 2009, p.288). Thus, when confronted with a situation where they were to focus on losses, respondents would be more likely to experience stereotype threat. In order to test this for themselves, the authors created two experimental test situations where both male and female undergraduate students were required to write a

selection of math questions from the GRE. In one situation the respondents would be given two points for each correct answer and zero points for each incorrect answer (promotion focus), and in the second situation the respondents were told that they would lose one point for each correct answer and three points for each incorrect answer (prevention focus).

Grimm et al. (2009) found that men performed better in the first situation where they were rewarded with gains, and women performed better in the second situation where they were rewarded with minimal losses. From this, the authors concluded that men performed better in the first situation because they experienced stereotype fit; the men expected to do well and thus accumulate a score (Grimm et al., 2009). The women did well in the second situation because they experienced stereotype fit in that they expected to lose points, and thus losing points conformed to their expectations of themselves. Consequently, Grimm et al. (2009) concluded that the way to reduce or avoid stereotype threat is to change the reward structure of the task required so that it mirrored the expectations of those experiencing the stereotype threat.

Racial Stereotypes

Steele and Aronson's (1995) pioneering article on stereotype threat focused on the racial stereotypes surrounding Blacks and Whites with regard to their intellectual capabilities. Steele and Aronson (1995) conducted three studies in order to determine whether or not the performance of African-Americans on aptitude tests would be affected by stereotype threat when compared to Caucasians. It was found that the performance of the African-American participants was the same as Caucasian participants when race was not salient, but that the performance of the African-American participants decreased in

comparison to that of the Caucasian participants when race was salient. Steele and Aronson (1995) then conducted a fourth study in order to determine whether racial stereotypes were influential even when the test was not one of a diagnostic nature. It was found in the fourth study that the mere presence of a racial stereotype threat caused the African-American participants to perform poorer in comparison to Caucasians, regardless of the type or importance of the test. From these studies Steele and Aronson (1995) concluded that racially motivated stereotype threats occur because “it is frustration that makes the stereotype – as an allegation of inability – relevant to their performance and thus raises the possibility that they have an inability linked to their race” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 798). Consequently, Steele and Aronson (1995) were successful in demonstrating that not only did their participants experience decreased performance due to stereotype threat, but that this threat decreased their performance in other situations as well.

Several other authors have also written articles that test stereotype threat using race as the stereotyping factor which is intended to influence the performance of the participants, however, many of the articles published pertain to races other than African-Americans and Caucasians and thus differ from Steele and Aronson’s (1995) initial article. For instance, Armenta (2010) looked into the stereotype threats of two racially different groups: Asians and Latinos. In his study he measured the mathematical performance of each group, and found the performance of each to be consistent with their own stereotype. For Latino participants Armenta (2010) found that they scored low in mathematical ability, as suggested by their racial stereotype; for Asian participants he found that they scored high in mathematical ability, which is also congruent with their

racial stereotype. Therefore Armenta (2010) concluded that racially-motivated stereotype threat does have an effect on the performance of individuals, but that it only acts as a detriment to their performance if the stereotype is negative.

Similar to Steele and Aronson (1995) and Armenta (2010), von Hippel, von Hippel, Preacher, Schooler, and Radvansky (2005) looked at the various ways that each race would attempt to overcome stereotype threat when it concerned their intelligence, as compared to that of another racial group. In this study von Hippel et al. (2005) compared African-Americans against Caucasians in one study, and Caucasians against Asians in another. In each experiment, participants were required to complete a math test where their race was salient. The authors found that those participants who rated high in impression management would deny their stereotyped incompetence, whereas those who rated low in impression management would not. These studies demonstrate that when placed in situations where they were faced with a stereotype threat based on intelligence and were then required to perform an action pertaining to their intelligence, participants would deny the importance of intelligence as a whole. This is important to the concept of stereotype threat because it shows that those who experience the phenomenon will go to great lengths in order to manage their appearance in order mitigate the effects of the stereotype. Though von Hippel et al. (2005) did not directly test whether or not stereotype threat is racially motivated, it is interesting to note that their work is based on the principle that stereotype threat is indeed present where races are placed in direct comparison; this is likely the result of several previous studies which demonstrate the link between stereotype threat and race.

Based on the findings regarding race and stereotype threat, it can be assumed that Steele and Aronson's (1995) initial work is correct in establishing a link between stereotype threat and race. Based on further findings, it would appear that when the racial stereotype is negative it will induce a negative threat on the individual and thus decrease his or her performance (Armenta, 2010; von Hippel et al., 2005; Steele & Aronson, 1995), whereas when the stereotype is positive, it will not threaten the performance of the individuals but it actually has the tendency to aid performance.

Gender Stereotypes

The second most commonly studied phenomenon with regards to stereotype threat is gender. Several articles focus on the differences in males and females with regard to their mathematical abilities when faced with a stereotype threat. As noted in the article by Grimm et al. (2009) mentioned above, men are often stereotyped as being good at math, whereas women are often considered to have poorer mathematical skills. Grimm et al.'s (2009) article demonstrates these gender stereotypes as having an effect on both genders when each was placed in a situation that highlighted their respective stereotype. Men's performance was boosted in a situation that emphasized the stereotype suggesting their increased mathematical competence, whereas women's performance was decreased in a situation where they were stereotyped as having poor mathematical ability. This gendered stereotype has been confirmed several times by a number of research studies (Rydell, McConnell, & Beilock, 2009; Wout, Danso, Jackson, & Spencer, 2008).

Based on the assumption that women perform poorly in tests of mathematical skill when compared to men and presented with a gendered stereotype threat, Wout et al. (2008) conducted two studies in order to determine when women would be affected by

stereotype threat: (1) in a self-threat situation when women were required to provide the researchers with their SAT-Math (SAT-M) scores, and (2) in a group-threat situation where women were required to provide their SAT-M scores as well as fill out a gender identification questionnaire prior to completing the math test. Self-threat was believed to have occurred when a respondent believes the stereotype is true of them, and group-threat was believed to have occurred when a respondent believed that the stereotype is true of their gender (Wout et al., 2008). The results of the first study indicated that women were more likely to underperform compared to their SAT-M scores when they were concerned with confirming the self-threat that they were bad at math. The results of the second study demonstrated that those with higher gender identification were affected more by group-threat whereas those with low gender identification were not (Wout et al., 2008). Thus, though gendered stereotype threats often affect the performance of women, especially when required to complete mathematical tests, the notion of self-threat and group-threat demonstrate that there are differences in the circumstances and types of threats which affect them.

Generalizing from this study, one can assume that those who have a high level of identification with any stigmatized group will be more prone to poor performance from stereotype threat than those who do not heavily identify with the stereotyped group (Wout et al., 2008). In a similar article published by Rydell, McConnell, and Beilock (2009), the authors conducted four studies and from them confirmed that when presented with the negative stereotype that females are bad at math, women were threatened and exhibited poor performance. However, when presented with a positive stereotype, such as all college students are good at math, or with both a negative and a positive stereotype,

women were able to identify with the positive stereotype and improve their performance (Rydell et al., 2009). The most important finding of this research, however, is the importance of other social organizations or affiliations. Women's performance increased when they could identify themselves as a member of a social group (Rydell et al., 2009). It is clear that stereotype threat has much more of an effect on those who have internalized the stereotype and have integrated it into their self-concept, but this is not to say that it will not affect those who have not incorporated the stereotype in their identity (Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Quiamzade & Croizet, 2007; Rydell et al., 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Wout et al., 2008).

Other Stereotyped Groups

Most of the prevalent stereotype studies to date revolve around the effects of racial stereotypes or intelligence stereotypes on performance. However, many of the studies below have results that are broad enough to be applicable to all stigmatized groups, not just those which were investigated in the specific study. Some of the studies mentioned above specifically test theories with the purpose of generalizing to other stigmatized groups. Johns et al. (2008) conducted an experiment based on emotional regulation as a cause of stereotype threat, and they used two different participant populations in order to ensure the generalizability of their findings. Consequently, these researchers were able to determine that emotional regulation has an impact on performance on both female participants and racial minorities. When faced with stereotype threat both groups felt anxiety and attempted to suppress it, thus reducing their ability to perform well (Johns et al, 2008). The idea of emotional regulation depleting cognitive resources and resulting in stereotype threat effects is similar to the general

theory of stereotype threat presented by Schmader et al. (2008). The authors propose that stress impairs prefrontal processing, as well as the constant monitoring of one's performance, and the suppression of negative emotions. Thus, it can be suggested that not only females or members of a racial minority will experience poor performance as a result of attempting to regulate their negative emotions, but that any member of a stigmatized group who faces the threat of confirming a negative stereotype will be vulnerable to this type of cognitive depletion.

Though many studies have been conducted in such a way that the authors are able to suggest their generalizability to other populations, none of the articles found actually tested the effects of stereotype threat in groups other than those related to racial or gender minorities. Consequently, determining the effects of stereotype threat on reintegrating offenders has the potential to validate the generalizability of stereotype threat, as well as provide insight into an issue that potentially has strong implications for the successful reintegration of offenders.

Offender Reintegration

Offenders face a multitude of problems upon their release from prison and subsequent reintegration back into society (Bales & Mears, 2008; Bucklen & Zajac, 2009; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Often, offenders face issues related to employment, housing, and re-establishing pro-social and familial bonds, all of which are essential factors for a successful reintegration (Bales & Mears, 2008). However, one of the most pressing problems facing offenders upon release and reintegration is the lack of release preparation provided by the institution (Gideon, 2009; Wormith et al., 2007). Release planning is essential for successful reintegration because it provides the offenders with

knowledge of what to expect upon release; it is impossible to segregate members of society for long periods of time and expect them to require little to no help upon their reintroduction into the community. This failure to provide the necessary release planning is the result of a severe lack of funding for rehabilitative programming (Petersilia, 1995; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Petersilia (2001) highlights this issue when she states: “Fewer programs, and a lack of incentives for inmates to participate in them, means that fewer inmates leave prison having participated in programs to address work, education, and substance use deficiencies” (p. 4). Consequently, many offenders leave prison without the requisite preparation for successful reintegration and for living their lives on the outside (Windzio, 2009).

In the reintegration literature, three themes are apparent: employment, housing, and familial supports. Several authors argued that these are the most important and influential factors in determining whether or not an offender will succeed in their reintegration efforts once released from prison (Bales & Mears, 2008; Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008; Maidment, 2006; Taxman, 2004; Travis & Petersilia, 2001; Vennard & Hedderman, 2009). Each theme will be discussed in detail below.

Finding Legitimate Employment

In order to reintegrate successfully after a period of incarceration, offenders need to secure legitimate employment. This is often extremely difficult as many employers do not wish to employ ex-offenders, and many jobs have conditions which prevent them from hiring individuals who possess a criminal record (Harris & Keller, 2005; Travis & Petersilia, 2001; Vennard & Hedderman, 2009). Travis and Petersilia (2001) explain the hardships offenders face when seeking out meaningful and legitimate employment: “The

stigma of incarceration makes ex-inmates unattractive for union jobs, civil disabilities limit ex-felons' access to skilled trades or the public sector, and incarceration undermines the social networks that are often necessary to obtain legitimate employment" (p. 304). Thus offenders are likely to be turned down for jobs for a variety of reasons, all which relate back to their criminal background and incarceration history.

But not only is an offender's criminal record or carceral history the only detriments to his attempt to find work; many offenders are considered to be members of a disadvantaged group (Graffam et al., 2008). This is because they lack many basic skills required to obtain legitimate employment. However, a study completed by Graffam et al. (2008) found that offenders as a whole were less likely to be able to obtain and maintain employment than members from all of the following disadvantaged groups including: those with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities, those with physical disabilities, those with chronic illnesses, and those with communication disorders. Offenders typically face these types of difficulties because they are not afforded the same employment opportunities as a result of their criminal history. In addition, many have difficulty keeping a job because their conditions of their release make it difficult to do so (Graffam et al., 2008). From this it can be concluded that stereotypes and stigmatization have a great effect on the opportunities afforded to offenders.

Obtaining Housing

Finding employment is not the only domain in which offenders have difficulty, as obtaining housing is another area of concern for newly released offenders. Offenders are typically mandated to return to the community from which they were living prior to their incarceration; however, those with long-term incarcerations may no longer have ties with

their families and thus cannot return to the same home (Bales & Mears, 2008; Travis & Petersilia, 2001). Additionally, many offenders are able to find housing that they can afford, but they are unable to live in these residences because they are unsuitable given their parole conditions (Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009) or their risk for recidivism. Affordable housing units are often located in “undesirable neighborhoods characterized by poverty and violence” (Maidment, 2006, p. 104). Similar to the problem associated with finding employment is the fact that many landlords are reluctant to rent to individuals with criminal records (Maidment, 2006; Petersilia, 2001).

Family Supports

Given the difficulties offenders face in finding housing, many will choose to live with family if the option is available (Bales & Mears, 2008; Maidment, 2006; Petersilia, 2001). However, Travis and Petersilia (2001) explain that the opportunity for an offender to live with their family upon release is declining: “The longer time in prison translates into a longer period of detachment from family and other societal networks, posing new challenges to the process of reintegration” (p. 299). Thus, offenders often struggle to find adequate housing, which results in more offenders residing in homeless shelters or living on the street.

Ideally, residing with one’s family upon release would provide an offender with a stable place to live, but would also have numerous other benefits. In her discussion of reintegrative needs, Taxman (2004) suggests that “priority should be given to the concerns of offenders that generally fall into the categories of survival needs – a place to live, a place to work, food on the table, and people to love” (p. 34). In an ideal situation, residing with family provides the offender with at least two of these needs: A place to

live and people to love. Though not many articles focus on the need of an offender to be loved and feel valued upon release, a few articles discuss the importance of emotional support. Though the emphasis appears to be placed on female offenders, the literature suggests that re-establishing bonds with family is extremely important for the success of an offender's reintegration. Not only does it communicate to the offender that they are valued and cared for by others (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001), but these social bonds serve as a means to overcome criminal stereotypes and community rejection (Maidment, 2006; Rungay, 2004). Consequently, in ideal circumstances family support could provide the offender with a method of identity and stigma management which would aid in easing the process of reintegration.

Reintegration and Stereotypical Perspectives

It is clear from the above review that there is a great amount of research that has been conducted into the impacts of reintegration on offenders. However, very little research has been conducted in order to determine the effects of stereotype threat on offender reintegration. The current literature on stereotype threat does not focus on offenders as a group of individuals who could potentially fall victim to stereotype threat. Arguably, they are just as likely to be influenced by stereotype threat based upon their offender label and its negative connotations. The fact that stereotype threat may be influencing the behaviour of offenders is important in terms of their reintegration because it has the potential to provide an explanation for their inability to successfully reintegrate. Offenders are aware of the fact that they are negatively stereotyped, and this awareness often leads to their poor performance in social situations because they are trying to manage the associated stereotypes. As a consequence, offenders end up acting

inappropriately despite their identity management, because they have focused too much on the stereotype and neglected other realms of identity, such as speech and body language (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat is very problematic for offenders who are attempting to obtain housing or employment, because they are so focused on making a good impression and not being stereotypical that they lose focus in other areas, and their poor performance in these areas costs them their potential employment. Consequently it can be suggested that some offenders are unsuccessful at reintegrating not because they are systematically excluded from society by others, but rather because stereotype threat results in their failure.

Method

To date, research has not been conducted to determine whether offenders experience stereotype threat, nor how this phenomenon affects their reintegration when released from incarceration. As such this research addresses these ideas by gathering qualitative data that allows each participant to explain how they have or have not been affected by the effects of stereotype threat. Though determining how many offenders are affected by this phenomenon is a quantitative issue, this study seeks to gather qualitative data to allow for a deeper and more holistic understanding of the issue. In order to better understand this issue from the point of view of the participants, interviews were chosen as the method for gathering data.

In-depth answers were gathered from interviews with 18 clients from the John Howard Society of Toronto. The interview questionnaire was based on the semi-structured interview technique in order to permit participants to provide in-depth responses, but to also provide some structure to the discussion. This type of structure would ensure that the participants provided their opinions on topics of interest, and it also allowed for them to elaborate or mention relevant ideas that have not been probed for. Furthermore, as this study is exploratory in nature and there are many unknowns regarding the effects of stereotype on an offender's reintegration, allowing the participants to elaborate or discuss certain related topics as they see fit is crucial to having a complete understanding of these effects.

The following sections discuss the research questions, data collection methods, and method of data analysis in detail.

Research Questions

In order to investigate the assumption that offenders would be required to spend time managing the negative stereotypes associated with their identities (Akers & Sellers, 2009; Goffman, 1963; MacLin et al., 2006), semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 offenders who had recently been released from a provincial or federal institution, and are now current clients of the John Howard Society of Toronto. Using an inductive analytic framework, this research was guided by the following question: How does labeling and stereotype threat affect an offender's ability to successfully reintegrate back into society after a period of incarceration? This question was further operationalized into more detailed propositions including: 1) whether or not offenders experience stereotype threat, 2) how experiencing stereotype threat affects their reintegration efforts, and 3) what offenders do to overcome the effect of stereotype threat.

The interview questionnaire contains 24 open-ended questions that ask participants to discuss issues related to their reintegration, labeling, stereotype threat, and the consequences of stereotype threat on their reintegration (see Appendix D). Moreover, there are demographic questions that ask respondents to disclose their age, racial background, level of education, and current type of housing. Questions regarding reintegration inquire about the issues offenders have had to face since their release, such as familial support, employment, criminal justice system interventions, and the types of community supports available to offenders. These types of questions were posed in order to determine how well the individual felt they had reintegrated back into society after their time spent in incarceration. These questions provided the researcher with insight into how the participant has adjusted upon release.

Questions pertaining to labeling theory require the participant to discuss the way that others treat him when learning he has a criminal record, the way that he believes others view him now, the way he views himself now that he has a record, as well as how he thinks prison has affected him and how others treat him when they learn that he has done time. These questions are included in the questionnaire because they allow the researcher to determine the way that the participant perceives himself due to both his criminal record and the fact that he has been to prison. In addition, these questions allow the researcher to determine how much the participant feels labeled and stereotyped by other members of society. These questions are important to ask the participant because if the participant feels that there is a change in the way others perceive him or in the way that he perceives himself, then it is likely he will experience stereotype threat.

The questions regarding stereotype threat were designed to determine whether or not offenders felt concerned about conforming to the stereotypes of others, and how stress may impact their behaviour. These questions ask the participants to describe what they think the stereotype of a criminal is, and whether or not they worry about becoming or portraying this stereotype. These questions are included in order to determine if stereotype threat has affected the participant's motivation to be pro-active in reintegrating, or if it has damaged the participant's perceptions of self. These questions also determine how worried the participants are about the perceptions of others and to what extent this affects the actions of the participants.

Three questions were posed that assess the consequences of stereotype on the offender. These questions were: 1) Would the fact that you have been to prison stop you from doing something you wanted to do, 2) Have you ever decided not to do something

because it meant you would have to tell people that you have been to prison, and 3) Have you ever felt like you weren't good enough for something? These questions are integral to this study because they determine whether stereotype threat has an impact on the reintegration of the participants, based on the fact that stereotype threat would likely prevent offenders from doing certain things necessary to further their successful reintegration.

Based on the consulted literature, it was presupposed that offenders would face a great deal of difficulty in managing their identities due to stereotype threat, and consequently they would experience increased difficulty in their reintegration efforts. It was also assumed that they would be labeled by other members of society, and thus they would have limited opportunities for housing, employment, and educational advancement.

Data Collection

The interview questionnaire for this study was developed from January to April 2010. The questionnaire was created using the ideas discussed previously based on the labeling, stereotype threat, and reintegration literatures. In addition, previously constructed questionnaires were consulted in order to ensure that a suitable level of language was used in wording the questions. The questionnaire, along with other supporting documents, was submitted to the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in May 2010, and permission was granted by the REB in June 2010.

Participants of this study were recruited from the John Howard Society of Toronto, a non-profit organization that aids offenders in their reintegration efforts by

providing them with education upgrading, employment counseling, and programming targeted to reduce their criminogenic needs. The majority of the cliental the John Howard Society of Toronto have spent time in prison and have or are currently facing the issues related to community reintegration. This population met the needs of this study in that all clients have spent time in prison and are struggling with issues related to reintegration. Based on this it was deemed to be an ideal population for this study.

Access to the participants was obtained by contacting the Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Toronto. The researcher explained that she had worked with clients of the John Howard Society in Ottawa and that she was familiar with the mandate of the organization and the needs of the cliental. Due to the researcher's previous experience with the organization she was granted access to the Toronto branch's cliental.

In order to qualify for participation in the study, clients were required to have spent time incarcerated, either in a provincial or federal institution. Any male client of the John Howard Society of Toronto over the age of 18 who has served time in a provincial or federal carceral facility qualified for participation in this study. The study was advertised via the placement of a poster in the Society's reception area. Additionally, program facilitators and councilors were informing their clients of the study and booking interview times for any clients that expressed a desire to participate. In total, 18 clients signed up to participate in this study. Interviews were conducted in an intake office at the John Howard Society of Toronto's main office on July 29th, 2010, August 5th, 2010, August 12th, 2010, and August 19th, 2010.

To ensure that the participants were willing and did not feel coerced to participate in the study, a consent form (please see Appendix C) was administered verbally and

visually. This informed participants that this is a voluntary study and that they are not obligated to participate. Once consent had been obtained, the interview questionnaire was administered. This was done verbally. The researcher was mindful of using non-academic language in the questions so as to make the questions easily understood and accessible to all participants. Despite all attempts to make the questionnaire accessible, a few questions required further clarification. When this occurred, the interviewer clarified the question and made sure that the participant was comfortable enough to answer the question.

Each interview was expected to take approximately 40 minutes to complete, as it was estimated that it would take the participants roughly this long to answer the 24 questions posed in the questionnaire. Most participants spoke for about 30 minutes, with the shortest interview lasting nine minutes, and the longest interview lasting for 63 minutes.

Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and hand-written notes. Of the 18 participants, 15 consented to the interview being audio recorded, and three did not. Audio recorded interviews were transcribed and integrated with the handwritten notes made during the interview. For the three interviews that were not audio recorded, handwritten notes were typed up for further analysis.

At the end of each interview the participants were compensated with \$20.00. This compensation was provided so that it would entice individuals to participate, as well as show gratitude for their time and participation. Each participant was made aware of the fact that they would receive compensation even if they did not complete the study in order to ensure that they did not feel coerced into participating, and to reinforce the

notion that their participation was completely voluntary. None of the participants in the study chose to end the interview early.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by the three themes: Labeling, stereotype threat, and reintegration. The transcribed data was read initially to ascertain subthemes that emerged from the in-depth interviews that focused on labeling and stereotype threat, as well as the participants' understanding of how labeling and stereotype threat affect their ability to successfully reintegrate. Guided by grounded theory these themes and emerging subthemes were organized and prioritized.

Grounded theory, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2008):

...Derives directly from the from the pragmatist roots of interactionism. It captures the inductive logic through which analysts explore the social or natural world through practical engagements with it, derive working models and provisional understandings, and use such emergent ideas to guide further empirical explorations. (p. 300)

Using a grounded theory approach is a good inductive tool to contextualize and organize the data collected for this study. It allows for the analysis and organization of the data collected in a special context such as Toronto but at the same time it connects the data with the middle-range theories derived from other data and other contexts.

Though these themes were partially imposed on the participants by virtue of the structured interview method, participants were nevertheless given the freedom to determine the importance of the themes and suggest subthemes by how much they elaborated on their responses. Additionally, the subthemes that emerged over the course of the interviews were guided by the participants themselves, based on what they chose to

discuss. Each of the themes and subthemes will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Results

The following section discusses the results of the study, especially the answer to the general question: the participants' understanding of how labeling and stereotype threat affect their ability to successfully reintegrate. This section provides a breakdown of the participant's demographic information, and then presents the results of the interview process. The results are organized according to the three main themes of this study: Labeling, stereotype threat, and reintegration.

Participant Demographics

A total of 18 participants were interviewed. Participants ranged in age from 25 years old to 50 years old, and the average age of all participants was 36. They were a fairly racially diverse group, with 12 (67%) White participants, five (27%) Black participants, and one (6%) Aboriginal participant. Blacks usually consist of 11% of the Canadian population, and Aboriginals typically represent 4%, but these numbers are often much higher in the criminal justice system, as these two populations tend to over-represented. Given the fact that these minorities are typically over-represented in the criminal justice system, the sample population reflects this discrepancy.

All of the participants had some form of formal schooling, but it was diverse. Two participants had completed only elementary school, nine participants had attended high school, four participants had a college education, and three participants had completed a university degree.

Participants had a wide variety of carceral experience. Of the 18 participants interviewed, 13 had spent time exclusively in provincial institutions, three had spent time exclusively in federal institutions, and two had spent time in both federal and provincial

institutions. One participant mentioned being incarcerated in British Columbia, but the rest of the participants were incarcerated in Ontario. Participants who had spent time in provincial institutions ranged from having been incarcerated once to as many as thirty times. The average number of times this study's participants spent in provincial custody was eleven times. Participants who had served federal sentences ranged from being incarcerated one time to four times. The average number of times the participants had spent time in federal custody was two times.

All of the participants were at various stages of reintegration. Though it was not explicitly asked how long it had been since their most recent release, many participants mentioned this. The longest time reported was over 20 years, while the shortest time reported was three weeks. Participants also varied in employment status and the type of housing they currently had. Three of the participants were working at the time of the interview, and 15 were unemployed. At the time of the interview, four participants were homeless. The remaining 14 had obtained some form of housing: Seven participants lived in subsidized housing, five rented an apartment, one lived with family, and one owned a detached house.

Labeling of Offenders

All 18 participants mentioned feeling as though they had been labeled once they were processed through the criminal justice system and had spent time inside prison. The participants were quick to mention that they felt as though they were being judged by others, and that as soon as others heard the participants had been through the criminal justice system, they looked at them in a different way than before they knew of their

criminal status. As a result, it became clear through the interviews that the participants felt that labeling was a prevalent issue.

In addition to feeling as though they were labeled by others, seven participants indicated that they felt different once they had contact with the criminal justice system, and these seven participants tended to label themselves as different. These participants all found that their incarceration had a negative impact on their lives, and thus it was apparent that being in prison had affected them. However, of the 18 participants interviewed, 15 stated that prison had a negative effect on their life. Consequently, the participants' responses demonstrate that there is a difference in the application of labeling, both by self and by others, that appears to vary based on having a criminal record and incarceration history. The following subsections discuss the participant's experiences with labeling due to both their criminal record and their incarceration history in greater detail.

Labeling by Others

Each of the 18 participants interviewed expressed feeling as though they were labeled negatively by others. As the participants of this study were predominantly White, race did not appear to have any effect on the labeling of offenders. Additionally, these offenders were incarcerated both provincially (15 participants) and federally (3 participants), with sentences ranging in length from 30 days to twelve years. From the data it appears that these factors are irrelevant in the labeling process, and that an individual will be negatively labeled regardless of any other factor, if he possesses a criminal record or has spent time in prison. For instance, one participant explained the

way he felt after he was released from prison, when he was asked if he thought that having a criminal record made others treat him differently:

Ya, kid gloves. Basically they treat you with kid gloves, you know, and they walk on egg shells or... I think sometimes they are set back, and they've already labeled me, right? "You're a bad guy" or you know... But you are labeled. Basically labeled. Especially by society... But you get all kinds of responses, and in general, not good. Not good. You're separated, you know.

Another participant responded that: "Um, You're looked – people look down upon you. You know, it's like, you're a lower-class citizen, you're a criminal, you know, you're a persona non grata. And stuff like that." From the above narratives it is apparent that the participants felt as though they were separated from society because of the fact that they had a criminal record. It is quite clear that offenders felt they were being treated as outsiders, and felt they were not afforded the same respect as those in society who did not have criminal records.

However, some of the participants identified a difference in the way that they are treated, despite the fact that all offenders have a criminal record. Three participants suggested that the type of crime committed would have an impact on the way in which an offender was treated, as well as how much society would look down on them. One participant stated:

Well everybody's got different views... Well first they ask you why you were in jail. And if you were a pedophile, rapist, well that's not good. But if you were a bank robber, usually people will be more accepting, stuff like that.

Despite the fact that this type of hierarchy exists, where some crimes are considered to be more worthy of labeling than others, each participant made it clear during the interview that they felt that all offenders are labeled and treated poorly, the

only difference being the degree to which they will be stereotyped based on the crime committed. However, it was ambiguous among the participants' responses that despite the crime committee, all offenders are labeled for having a criminal record or having been to prison, and that the type of crime is irrelevant in this type of labeling.

Disclosing a Criminal Record

Participants varied in whether or not they chose to disclose their criminal record or prison experiences to others. Of the 18 participants interviewed, seven participants did not tell others unless it was necessary, while eight participants told everyone about it, claiming that they felt as though they had nothing to hide be ashamed of. Three of the participants stated that they would get mixed reactions from those that they told, and as a result they never knew whether or not disclosing this information would result in a positive or a negative reaction from others.

Seven of the participants in this study mentioned that they tried not to disclose their criminal record unless it was absolutely necessary. They recognized that disclosing their criminal record or that fact that they have been to prison to others would likely result in a strong reaction from the individual they are telling. One participant stated: "I tell people... and I don't go around broadcasting it, but if a person asks me I tell them the truth. And they are either fine with it, and if not, then I'm sorry." Another participant explained that he will outright lie about having a record in order conceal this fact from others, until he absolutely cannot lie anymore:

And I always lie about it, I never own up to having a criminal record. Like I mean in applying for jobs or in any situation where I am making an application or something. Within human circles and interactions, um, you know, I'll keep it on the low down until it might be necessary to mention it.

Other participants refrained from disclosing their criminal record to those whom they felt would not handle the news well and react negatively, but their criteria for telling others was not based on reaction alone. Some participants mentioned that they would disclose their criminal records to others in situations where it was not necessary to do so, as long as those they were telling were guaranteed to receive the news well.

Those who chose to disclose their criminal record or prison history did so almost in defiance of the likelihood of being labeled. Of all the participants, eight stated they would disclose their criminal record or incarceration history willingly. These participants chose to disclose their criminal record and incarceration history to other people because they figured that it would be easier to be upfront, rather than have to deal with it at a later time. According to the participants, the reason for being upfront had to do with the need for people to know who they really are and to see them as more than just a stereotypical criminal. A participant who chose to disclose his record stated:

I'm not really, what do you say, ashamed. I don't look down on myself or any of that stuff. So however they take it, they take it. Because people are people and they judge, so whatever. If I have to tell somebody that then I tell them, and they will take it the way they take it. I can't get them to change the way they are thinking; but who knows, maybe after spending some time with me it will help them change their mind, but I don't let it bother me, no.

It is clear that offenders who experienced this idea of being up front about their criminal label may have accepted that their past will result in their being labeled, but know that they themselves do not belong to that label. They hope that in telling others about their criminal histories early on, they will be able to avoid being labeled and eventually people would look beyond their criminal histories and see them just as people.

Self Perceptions

Whether an offender was more likely to view themselves as changed or the same varied with the amount of time that they were involved in the criminal justice system. Seven of the 18 participants interviewed indicated that time they spent in prison had changed them, and not for the better. Those involved with the criminal justice system numerous times were more likely to view themselves differently than prior to their sentencing and incarceration. These participants tended to be in contact with the Provincial system on numerous times, and had served, on average, more than five Provincial sentences. One such participant said:

I had a good outlook on myself before, and I kept reminding myself that I don't have a record, and that's good and I can go to the States and that. Now I thought of it like, I can't believe I have a record. But what can you do about it?

The above participant's words clearly show that there was a transformation in the way he viewed himself prior to his incarceration and that the prison experience has caused him to have a more negative perception of self. Another participant speaks of a different experience of how incarceration transformed his perception of himself, an experience of disempowerment or weakening. He notes, "I had potential, and I could overcome any obstacle," and that once he was released from prison this was no longer possible, as several opportunities were no longer available to him.

Seven of the participants cited instances or ways their prison experiences changed them. Nevertheless not many of the participants actually identified themselves as criminals, and in fact, only one of the participants bragged about his criminal behaviour during the interview. The rest of the participants distanced themselves from the label of

criminal, and the following narrative appears to be representative of the respondents interviewed:

You know, I wouldn't call myself a criminal, I don't have criminal behaviour. I don't even cross at the wrong light, you know what I mean? I don't steal... that was just something going on in my mind back then, I was younger... I don't know what that was. Like I said I think there are differences, but the word criminal is just applied to everyone who has been to jail. No, I don't think so, I don't think I would label them all. Bad decision makers yes, some criminal, yes.

Three of the participants indicated that the most significant change in self-perception after being imprisoned was in the way that they structured their time. One of the participants discussed how in prison he had a routine, and when he was released his routines were disrupted, and he realized that while in prison he had lost the ability to schedule well and plan for himself. He stated:

And do I see myself differently? Ya, it's like why am I questioning things and why am I worried all the time? But in there you had your routines, and out here everything is all over the place you know, you gotta go here, and you gotta go there, and you gotta go here. In there it was all laid out and ya... I see myself as scattered sometimes, scattered all over the place. I have to pull myself together. And lately I have been getting tired, really tired of... just tired.

Such an experience of time would not be as prevalent with offenders who have served shorter sentences. This particular participant, however, served eleven years inside a federal institution. As a result, it is possible to argue that he had become institutionalized, and his return to normal societal activities entails noticeable differences.

The participants' narratives show that even though they were aware of the impact of their criminal record on how others view them, and how their experiences inside prison changed them as people, they still resisted labeling themselves as criminals, and

disassociated themselves from that label. Nevertheless, most of the participants feel that the changes are more the result of life in prison than from being labeled once out of prison. These results about labeling are relatively different from the participants' experience with stereotype threat.

Stereotype Threat

Five of the eighteen participants admitted to experiencing stereotype threat since their release from prison. These five participants specifically expressed worry about conforming to or fulfilling a criminal stereotype. Additionally, these five participants noted that they compensated for the fear of criminal stereotype by taking extra measures to avoid being a stereotypical criminal. For instance, one participant explained how easy it is to conform to the label or the criminal stereotype without even realizing it:

I avoid things. See, I like to walk at night, I like to walk and explore. Until say, I could have a pair of pliers and a screwdriver in my bag because I was helping a friend out earlier in the day, put together some Ikea furniture, and I happened to go out for a walk late at night. I'm suddenly not a guy going out for a walk late at night, I'm suddenly walking around late at night with burglary tools in my bag.

This participant's experience reveals the unseen process of how offender labeling can occur even in the most benign situations, and thus how easy it is to face stereotype threat.

In order to better understand the labeling and stereotyping of offenders, participants were asked to describe the typical stereotype of a criminal. Responses were divided along two ideas: First, that stereotypical criminals were an abstract "other," or someone who was not related to the participant. The second type of response portrayed stereotypical criminals as anyone, meaning any person could be labeled as a criminal, depending on the type of behaviour they were exhibiting.

Stereotypical Criminals as “Others”

Thirteen participants described the stereotypical criminal as an “other” who is unlike regular citizens. One participant described such a stereotypical criminal by saying: “Black guy; tattoos... Um, hanging out in certain areas, listening to certain types of music, they wear clothes a certain way.” Another participant described the stereotypical criminal much in the same way that a criminal would be described on TV or by the police, by stating: “Male, black, 6”, 140-200 pounds.” One participant suggested that stereotypical criminals have “the biker look” to them. The participants that described the stereotypical criminal as an “other” were more likely to be worried about being labeled by others, due to the fact that they believed members of society would view them as “others” based on their criminal history. Accordingly, of the thirteen participants that described the criminal stereotype in this way, four experienced stereotype threat.

Participants that described the stereotypical criminal as someone abstract and distant tended to rely on physical attributes and stressed the difference between those criminals and everyone else. One participant listed physical attributes that he associated with stereotypical criminals, which were: “Bad ass, grubby, long hair, tattoos, male.” Another participant suggested that he was not a stereotypical criminal due to the fact that he did not have enough tattoos to fit the stereotype:

Um, a stereotypical criminal... Well as some friends of mine say, “You can’t be a criminal because you aren’t covered in tattoos.” You know, it’s like if you have tattoos all over the place then you gotta be a criminal. It seems to be the thing to do when you go to jail, everybody gets tattoos.

The idea that the stereotypical criminal can be identified by physical attributes was discussed by several participants. One participant claimed that he could pick out

those who had been to prison in a crowd based on their physical appearance, mannerisms, and body language:

I could walk around outside, and I can tell people who have done time. You can tell. Well, one big giveaway is prison tattoos. There's a certain thing like that, ok, that's easy. But you can tell, you can tell. I can sit in a mixed group of people, and I can tell people who have done time because of the way their table etiquette is. Ya it's interesting... the way they dress. It's like a cop off-duty. You can usually tell a cop off-duty because they don't wear colours, they look like a cop off-duty. And a prisoner out of jail looks like a prisoner out of jail. Well maybe that's the thing, I am very – I pick up on a lot of things.

It is clear from the above narrative that some of the participants felt that stereotypical criminals could be identified due to distinctive features that differentiate them from other members of society. One of the most prevalent differences was physical appearance, though these were difficult for the participants to define. As a result while many participants referred to the idea of a stereotypical criminal, the definition of such was somewhat vague in their descriptions.

Stereotypical Criminals as “Self”

Five participants described the stereotypical criminal as someone who could be ‘anybody.’ Several of the participants highlighted the fact that anyone could be a criminal because the label is defined by an act, and thus, as one participant aptly stated: “It could be me or you.” Participants advancing this idea suggested that the only difference between the members of society and a stereotypical criminal is the types of behaviour they exhibit and the actions that they perform. One participant highlighted the lack of observable differences between stereotypical criminals and other members of society by discussing his own experience with stereotyping:

Uh, just somebody who's always in trouble. Oh no, somebody that's like, bad news, you know what I mean? Because I'm thinking about when I was a kid and seeing you know, people in jail. And my mom always taught me not to associate with people who were associated with that, you know what I mean? But then when I went to jail... you know what? It's normal people that just got railroaded, you know what I mean?

This example underscores that this participant views a stereotypical offender as someone who is criminalized for his actions. These responses confirm the idea that offenders are labeled upon release, as there is labeled deviant by others. This participant suggests that anyone could be an 'offender' based on the labels that are given to them, based on the actions they have committed. Consequently, though there appears to be a well-known physical stereotype associated with criminals as a whole, several of the participants indicated that this stereotype is not required in order for someone to be a criminal.

The participants that believed that anyone could be a criminal were less likely to be worried about being labeled by others, because they did not believe in being compared to a criminal stereotype; this definition allowed them to be part of the anonymous 'anybody'. Consequently, only one participant that described a stereotypical criminal in this way experienced stereotype threat. How the participants perceived the criminal stereotype, and the degree to which they saw themselves as part of that stereotype, had an influence on whether or not they were worried about the effects of that stereotype.

Worried Versus Not Worried About Stereotype

Ten of the participants interviewed indicated that they were not worried about the criminal stereotype being applied to them by others. Those who did not experience stereotype threat expressed a lack of concern for how others viewed them, and whether or not they were being stereotyped for having been to prison or having a criminal record.

These participants were mentioned earlier in the discussion on labeling. They indicated they were not bothered by the label even if they encounter it. These participants suggested that they are more than just a criminal, and that others should be able to see this. With regards to worrying about fulfilling the criminal stereotype, one such offender stated:

Well ya, not worried, I'm just thinking that if that person would spend some time and talk to me then he would see, you know? But it's too bad, it's his loss. See, I turn it around, because I am one of those people who really don't care what people say about me, you know? Because not one of them says it to my face, for one. So who are they anyways? Um, because me, I know, God knows the truth. So I'm comfortable with that, they can say what they want to say. You know, they aren't going to change their ways, think they are better than me, whatever. You know, I'll leave.

Another participant furthered this idea by recognizing that some people will stereotype offenders regardless of who they are and what they have done to improve their lives, and as a result he does not pay attention to those types on individuals:

But you have a lot of people out there who will never forgive you, because you have been in trouble with the law. They will never let it go... you could do nothing wrong for twenty years, and the thought is still in the back of his mind. "He's been in jail, he is a criminal." People like that, I don't need, you know? I made mistakes, I paid for my mistakes, I deserve a fresh start and a fresh chance just like anyone else. People that don't think that... bye bye. There are always people who I run into in my life who will feel that way.

These participants realized that they could not change their criminal pasts, but that they could improve their futures, and that caring about the stereotypes and negative labels placed on them by others would not help them in improving their lives. As a result, these participants stopped caring about the opinions of these individuals, and lived their lives

on their own terms. Due to the fact that they were not concerned with the labels and stereotypes that others could potentially apply to them, these ten individuals did not appear to be experiencing stereotype threat.

Eight of the participants interviewed were worried about being stereotyped by others, and the consequences this would have on their reintegration. Of these eight participants, five specifically mentioned experiencing stereotype threat. Participants noted that having a criminal record and having been to prison meant that they are constantly on edge, worried about the next time that they will have to over-perform in order to compensate for a stigmatizing past. This anxiety hinders ex-offenders from living routine lives and hence reintegrating into society after their release from prison.

Several participants discussed how worrying about being stereotyped kept them from doing things that they wanted to do. For instance, many participants mentioned being stereotyped due to the way they dressed, and one participant's narrative highlights this concern:

Ya, because sometimes the way I dress, and all the clothes I have and that, they're not properly fitted or dressy, or whatever, right? So right away they're gonna know, they're gonna think it, right? And I try to tell the young kids around my area not to dress like that, right? But now styles are changing, clothes are not so baggy, right? You don't want to see kids who are twelve years old dressing like that, right? And the older people in society will have a problem with that. You will have a problem if you go into a store and your pants are falling down... they will think you are putting stuff in your pockets or you have weapons in there.

This concern regarding appearance is well founded. Almost all of the participants listed physical attributes that would indicate someone is a stereotypical criminal, and five of them also chose to discuss how they managed their physical appearance when they were

worried about confirming the negative criminal stereotype. Another participant discussed how he would clean up his appearance, but it was not achieving the results he had hoped: “That would like, put me down a bit, if I was to worry about it. But I wouldn’t worry about it. So if I had a job interview I would clean up a little bit, but I have been doing that and I still haven’t got a job...” The fact that this method was ineffective for the participant is likely due to the fact that he experienced stereotype threat.

The fear experienced by those worried about being stereotyped often translates into behaviours that mitigate stereotyping. The most common technique that participants reported using to combat negative stereotypes was to manage their current behaviour. Participants reported feeling as though they were being judged, and in order to be judged in a favorable way they needed to alter their behaviour, so that they could make up for the negative judgment they had received based on their criminal record. One participant stated: “I think sometimes they are set back, and they’ve already labeled me, right? ‘You’re a bad guy’ or you know. Ya, ya, that’s what I feel. And then I feel like I have to be Mr. Over Nice.” Another participant talked about how he felt that he needed to work harder at his job in order to ensure that he was not considered to be a stereotypical criminal:

Umm, probably. I would probably work harder just to prove them wrong... Ya, I have a perfect example of that. When I got out, when I first got released from the thing on bail, I once worked for my brother, and um, at first I was only like bringing two or three pieces of wood and bringing them to the truck, then I came back and I really hauled ass, you know? I was like, I was digging a hole, I was like working hard, not taking breaks... and I was moving concrete pieces, I was trying, I was like, giving it like, at least like 100 percent... 110 percent.

Given that using behaviours already in one's repertoire is easier than creating new behaviours to counter stereotypes, it can be assumed that those offenders who attempt to manage stereotyping by managing their current behaviour will be less likely to impede their own task performance and experience stereotype threat. However, this is not to say that they would not become a victim of stereotype threat, but this is merely a suggestion that their chances are probably less.

Both labeling and stereotypes play an important role in offenders' encounters with re-entry and settling back into society outside of prison walls. However, these two processes are reflected in a variety of ways that are not easily recognized. The following section shows the results of the study under discussion and details the experiences of the participants' reintegration process.

Reintegration

Each of the participants mentioned experiencing reintegrative issues that were consistent with the literature. The main domains for reintegrative issues were a lack of support from their families, finding employment, and finding adequate housing. All of these difficulties often result from labeling and stereotyping. Overall, the participant's responses made it clear that reintegration was not an easy accomplishment, and that many of them struggled to become productive members of society, for a variety of reasons. The incarceration histories of the participants appeared to predict the degree to which they struggled with reintegration, as those with long or multiple sentences had more difficulty reintegrating than those who had limited contact with the criminal justice system.

Family Support

Support from family relationships provides an invaluable support to offenders when they are initially released from prison. When asked about the types of support that they received from their families, participants responded with many ways in which their family did not provide them with any support, or that the support provided was inadequate or inappropriate. These families seemed to disregard the fact that their family member no longer has the same opportunities that they once had before they received a criminal record. They often held the participant up to unrealistic standards or created unattainable goals for the participant to aim for. For instance, one participant stated:

Like, I have a bunch of brothers and sisters, and my mom. And I'm like, the black sheep of the family, ok? They are always telling me "Why can't you find a job? Why can't you be good like me?" and stuff like that. And I say to them "Well it's hard. You live in my shoes for a year, and you see if you can handle it." And they won't.

From these responses it became clear that many of the participants were not supported by their families. If families were supportive, the support they gave to the participants was inadequate in that it did not meet the needs of the participants. This is not to say that the families did not try to help the participants, but rather that these families were unable to understand the transitional period that the participants were undergoing. Consequently, many participants were not receiving the type of familial support associated with increased reintegrative success.

Obtaining Employment

Thirteen of the participants experienced serious problems in finding legitimate employment, and one participant stated that having been to prison is a "major barrier" to employment. Each of the participants mentioned that it was hard to find a job due to

existing stereotypes associated with those who have criminal records. The collective opinion was that once a criminal background check was completed, the offender would not be given the job. Most felt this was due to the stereotypes surrounding those who have criminal records. One participant even mentioned that he had difficulty in finding places to volunteer, because of his criminal record:

...even in the community centers I went to, because I used to be a going around, to see if I could volunteer anywhere. Once they get to know me they are fine with me, before they find out I have a record we are ok. But once they find out a record they don't even want me there. I have been asked to leave a few times.

Another participant described what he did to overcome the issues related to obtaining a job with a criminal record. He described how he would present himself at his place of work to avert suspicion and avoid the need for a criminal record check. He stated: "Where in the past, like 20 years ago, I used to work in banks and mutual funds companies because they didn't check those things as often and so I could put on a suit and a tie and cut my hair short, and they would never suspect that I had done lengthy provincial sentences." However, in recent years more and more places of employment are requiring criminal record checks, and this is no longer a viable option of avoiding the stereotype's associated with one's past. In view of the increasing criminal record checks, one participant discussed how he deals with requests to run a criminal record checks on him:

I mean, if they want my criminal background check, I'm going to let them know that I have a record, because what's the point? I mean, they are going to find out anyways, and uh, then I'll just go – if they are doing a criminal background check I'll just go "Well, I'm not getting the job." Haha well it's usually nine times out of ten. It's not like they go "Well as long as there's no serious stuff, then it's

all good.” Like why are they doing a criminal background check, if it’s all good? “There’s no manslaughter or murder, you know, and that’s cool. The other stuff, that’s alright [name omitted].” With a criminal background check, if there is anything, you are done.

As stated previously, some participants suggested that the severity of labeling applied to an offender would depend on the type of offence committed, but it would appear that this may not be the case in searching for employment. From this narrative it can be ascertained that any offence history and offence type are irrelevant in criminal background checks, and as a result offenders struggle to find employment.

Housing

Participants stated that they were not labeled and stereotyped when applying for housing in the same way they were when they were applying for jobs, mostly due to the fact that they were using the services of an agency that was designed specifically to help those with undesirable pasts. However, despite this, labeling and stereotyping were often the reason that offenders experienced difficulty in obtaining secure and affordable housing, in that offenders cannot afford to pay rent due to the fact that many of them are unemployed. The participants’ employment status had a direct impact on their accommodations, as more than half of the participants were on some type of social assistance that subsidized their housing, were squatting on a friend’s couch, or were simply homeless. From this it is clear that even though potential landlords are not labeling and stereotyping offenders, the fact that potential employers are results in a lack of stable accommodation, which serves to weaken an offender’s ties to society and hinders reintegrative efforts.

Summary

This was an exploratory study to determine how labeling and stereotype threat affect an offender's ability to successfully reintegrate back into society after a period of incarceration. Based on the current literature on labeling theory, stereotype threat, and offender reintegration it was presupposed that offenders would encounter negative labeling upon their release from prison. Further, it was assumed that as a result of negative labels, ex-offenders would worry about conforming to these labels and experiencing stereotype threat in certain situations. These propositions were made based on the findings from the literatures on labeling, stereotype threats, and offender reintegration. The ideas from the literature review structured the data collection method for this study.

Though the three main guiding themes of this work, labeling, stereotype threat, and reintegration were imposed on the participants via the structure of the interview questionnaire, these themes served more as a way of organizing the data collection and not to strict procedures to be followed. Participants were given the freedom to answer the questions in such a way that they could give importance to some themes over others, and they were also able to create subthemes in elaborating on their responses. Several subthemes emerged this way, and from them came many major findings.

The major findings of the study were: a) all participants expressed feeling negatively labeled due to their criminal record and the time that they had spent in prison; b) participants were most likely to manage being labeled by not disclosing their criminal record or the fact they had been to prison to others; c) most participants felt that the changed they experienced was not a result of the time they spent incarcerated, but rather a

consequence of being in prison, it was prison that changed them, in that it “hardened” them; d) all of the participants expressed feeling that labeling affected their reintegration efforts, specifically their employment, housing, and relationships; and e) a small amount of participants in the study experienced stereotype threat.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that offenders face problems reintegrating back into society due to the fact that they are labeled, and the label that is applied to them has a negative stereotype attached to it. The participants of this study felt that they would be labeled regardless of whether they were required to disclose their criminal record or to disclose that they had been incarcerated. However, all of the participants explained that they felt as though they were excluded from society when released from prison, and as a consequence they struggled with not only having to adjust to having a criminal record, but also with reintegrating as well.

Many of the participants of this study were provincial offenders who had served less than a year in prison for assault-related charges. As the crimes and the punishments were less serious in nature, it is suggested that rather than sentencing these types of offenders to a period of incarceration, they should be sentenced to some form of diversion programming instead. Offenders that have been charged with assault are much more likely to benefit from a diversion program that focuses on violence prevention and/or anger management than they would in a potentially violent and hostile environment such as prison. Though these offenders would still be stereotyped due to their criminal record, their incarceration history would not be as lengthy, and thus they would be less likely to incur some of the same labels and stereotypes that others with longer prison terms would.

Regardless of the length of their prison sentence, several participants mentioned that they had trouble finding employment due to the fact that once a criminal record check was completed and their record was discovered, they were stereotyped and no

longer considered to be a desirable candidate for the job. This issue appeared to be very common to all offenders, as even those who were on OW or ODSP and not looking for employment were aware of the employment issues that the offender population faces. A few of the participants suggested that criminal background checks should only be completed when it is necessary to know if the applicant has a criminal record, so that they are not screened out of employment opportunities based on stereotypes as opposed to their personal attributes. As a result, it is recommended that the policy on criminal background checks be amended so that employers can look up a criminal record only when it is necessary to know the applicant's record for the purpose of doing the job.

Additionally, criminal background checks should only be done for specific offences, so that employers cannot screen out applicants based on the fact that they have a criminal record, but rather because they have a certain offence on file that is problematic for performing the duties of the specific job. It is hoped that these policy changes to criminal background checks will minimize the amount of stereotyping that employers impose upon their potential employees. It is hoped that this will result in more offenders obtaining legitimate employment once they are released from prison, and thus having more of a chance to become productive, independent, and financially stable individuals.

Though some participants did report experiencing stereotype threat as a result of having a criminal record or having spent time incarcerated, this phenomenon was not as wide-spread as expected. One of the reasons for this may have been due using qualitative semi-structured interviews. Past stereotype threat research has primarily been based on quantitative methods of data collection, using controlled laboratory environments. In the

interviews, however, participants could have actually experienced stereotype threat but not realized it. Therefore, many more of them could actually have experienced stereotype threat than those who chose to report it.

Issues with measurement may also have been prevalent in the population under study. Ideally, participants would have been first-time federal offenders as these individuals would theoretically be the most prone to experiencing stereotype threat. First-time federal offenders would be the most prone to this phenomenon due to the fact that they have spent a lengthy amount of time separated from society. However, only three of the 18 participants in this study were federal offenders, and only one was a first-time offender. The rest of the participants had spent time in provincial institutions, and all except for two had served multiple provincial sentences. As a result, the prevalence of stereotype threat amongst these participants could have been low based on the fact that theoretically they are the offender population least likely to experience this phenomenon.

Additionally, many of the articles consulted prior to conducting this study involved stereotypes that concerned female participants or minority participants. As the participants were strictly male, the results of this study may be different from past studies due to the fact that the participant populations are different. Typically females and minorities are considered inferior to Caucasian males, and as a result they are more likely to be stereotyped. As the participants were mostly Caucasian males, and it was mostly these males who did not report experiencing stereotype threat, it is possible that their gender and race may have mitigated their propensity for stereotype threat even though their offender status meant that they belonged to a stereotyped group.

The prevalence of stereotype threat experiences among the participant population also could have been low due to the fact that some of the participants may not have wished to talk about their personal feelings of self-doubt and failure with a researcher that they had just met. The researcher tried to create a safe and comfortable environment where each participant would be comfortable answering the questions and discussing these personal topics, however, regardless of this some participants may not have answered truthfully, or they may have failed to disclose certain details, which could have resulted in the mistaken belief that they did not experience stereotype threat when in reality they actually had.

The population studied may have also contributed to a low number of respondents experiencing stereotype threat. The fact that the population was all male could have been problematic, as mentioned above, and the fact that all members of the population reside in downtown Toronto could have affected the results. In addition, only 18 individuals were interviewed, and thus generalizability is an issue. Eighteen is too small of a sample to be able to generalize the results to a larger population, due to the fact that the small sample size means that the population may not be representative of the wider population. Therefore the results gathered, though valid, may not be an accurate representation of the way in which Canadian offenders as a whole are affected by stereotype threat.

Also, some of the questions were problematic in that the participants did not understand what was being asked of them. Typically, once the questions had been rephrased the participants had no trouble in answering them. However, during the seventeenth interview, a participant indicated that one of the questions was somewhat ambiguous in its wording, and as a result this could have had an effect on the responses

obtained from each of the other participants. The participants were asked if they thought that their life would have been different if they had not been to prison, and one participant indicated the issue with this question by stating:

Well I would say if I hadn't of gotten in trouble with the law, no, it would have been pretty good. But I think the prison, say – that question is kind of funny – say if I hadn't been to prison... It could have been a lot different if I was committing crimes but not going to prison for them. Right? It could be a lot worse... I don't think it would be different. Or it would be different, but I would say that my life would be different if I hadn't of gotten in trouble with the law.

This question was posed in order to determine if participants felt that they were stereotyped as a result of the time they spent incarcerated, or if their criminal record was solely to blame for the criminal stereotype. However, based on the fact that this question can be interpreted in two ways, the answers received are not reliable in that it is not known how the participant interpreted the question.

Though stereotype threat was not as prevalent among the participants as expected, it is an issue that affects the reintegration of some offenders. The participants that experienced stereotype threat mentioned that they mostly experienced this phenomenon when they were applying for jobs, as this was the area in which they were labeled and stereotyped the most. Consequently, further research into the effects of stereotype threat on offender reintegration should be completed to investigate the interconnections between stereotype threat and employment, and the effect that stereotype threat has on an offender's ability to perform well in an interview and obtain employment.

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Appendix A: REB Letter of Approval



RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

Date: June 14, 2010

To: Amanda Breen (PI)

From: Raymond Cox, REB Chair

File #: 09-136

Title: Effects of Stereotype Threat on Offender Reintegration

The University of Ontario Institute of Technology Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal. The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) and the UOIT Research Ethics Policy and Procedures.

DECISION: Approved

COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS:

This project has been approved for the period of (**June 14, 2010 – June 14, 2011**) subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The approval may be extended upon request.

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please contact REB Administration, to obtain the Change Request Form.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, a school, community organization or other institution it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

Section F, Article 1.13, Review Procedures for Ongoing Research of the TCPS <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm> requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Renewal Request annually. Contact REB Administration to obtain a copy of the Renewal Request/Final Report form.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence. Thank you.

REB Chair Dr. Raymond Cox, Faculty of Business & Information Technology Raymond.cox@uoit.ca	Sascha Tuuha, Compliance Officer 905 721 8668 ext 3693 compliance@uoit.ca
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Participants Needed! Earn \$20.00 for your time!

I am a Master's student from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and I am studying the difficulties people face when they return to the community following a prison sentence.

I am interested in talking to you about your experiences after you were released from prison, and how you think that going to prison has affected the rest of your life.

If you are a male who has served time in a federal or provincial prison then I would like to have the chance to interview you.

The study is based on your voluntary participation. It is also confidential; therefore I can guarantee that any information you provide me with will be kept confidential and I will be the only one to see it.

I will be holding interviews on July 29, August 5, 12, and 19. If you are interested in participating in the study, please speak to your case manager or Lois Powers.

Thank you!
Amanda, Primary Researcher





PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Study Name: The Effects of Stereotype Threat on Offender Reintegration
(REB # 09-136)**

Principal Investigator:
Ms. Amanda H. Breen, B.Soc.Sc
amanda.breen@uoit.ca

Supervisor:
Dr. Carla Cesaroni
carla.cesaroni@uoit.ca

**University of Ontario Institute of Technology
(905) 721-3111 Ext. 2517 (Dr Cesaroni) or (905)721-8668 (Research Services)**

-
- I understand that this study will be conducted to better understand the difficulties people face when they are returning to the community following a prison sentence.
 - I understand that if there is anything I don't understand during the interview, I may ask the interviewer to stop and explain it.
 - I understand that what we are doing today is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.
 - I understand that I don't have to do this interview if I don't want to. I understand I am doing it because I want to, not because someone made me.
 - I understand that I will be asked to provide the researcher with personal information, my feelings, and information about my time in prison as well as my exit from prison, so long as I am comfortable discussing the information they wish to talk about.
 - I understand that this interview is completely confidential. The researcher, Amanda Breen, cannot share any of the information I provide with anyone, including the police, the courts, parole/probation, or people at the John Howard Society.
 - I understand that the data collected, which can consist of handwritten notes, typed notes, and tape recordings, will be kept in a secure manner and will be destroyed after it is transcribed.

- I understand that due to the fact that the interview is tape recorded, the information gathered cannot be considered anonymous. However, the researcher, Amanda Breen, cannot share any of the information I provide with anyone, including the police, the courts, parole/probation, or people at the John Howard Society.
- I understand that once all the interviews are completed, the information will be grouped together so no one can be identified. This information will be stored in a secure place at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. In addition, all electronic files will be password protected. Only the principal investigator, Amanda Breen, will have access to this information.
- I understand that my confidentiality will be continually protected throughout the research process, and until all documents are destroyed.
- I understand that I may stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions I choose. The interviewer will not be upset if I choose to do these things.
- I understand that if I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be removed from the considerations of the research project and destroyed immediately.
- I understand that if at any time I have any questions about the study, I can call the interviewer at the above number.
- I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.
- I understand that I will get \$20.00 for doing this interview. I understand that if I chose not to finish the interview I will still receive the \$20.00.
- I understand that information from this study may be published as part of an article, but that all specific and identifying information will not be included in the article and will not be published.
- I understand that I should feel free to talk about any aspect of this interview with anyone.

If you have any concerns regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the Ethics and Compliance Officer at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology at compliance@uoit.ca or telephone at (905) 721-8688 ext. 3693. The file number for the project is 09-136.

Date: _____ Initial: _____

(Signature of participant)

Date: _____ Initial: _____

(Signature of researcher)

Appendix D: Interview Questionnaire

The Effects of Stereotype Threat on Offender Reintegration: Interview Questionnaire

“To begin the interview, I am going to ask you some demographic questions, which are personal questions about you. Please remember that you don’t have to answer any question that you don’t want to. Also, if you want to end the interview at any point that is fine. You will still receive the \$20.00 compensation no matter what. Please be aware that if you choose to end the interview early, all of the information you have provided me with will be removed from the study and destroyed immediately.”

Demographic Information

1. How old are you?
2. What is your racial background? (Do you consider yourself black, native, Asian, south east Asian, middle eastern or other)
3. How far have you gone in school?
4. What type of housing do you have?

“Now I am going to ask you a few questions about you experiences when you released from prison. There are no right or wrong answers. Please remember that you don’t have to answer any question that you don’t want to. Also, if you want to end the interview at any point that is fine. You will still receive the \$20.00 compensation no matter what. Please remember that if you choose to end the interview early, all of the information you have provided me with will be removed from the study and destroyed immediately.”

Reintegration Questions

5. Describe the types of things you have had to face since you were released from prison.
 - a. Probe if participant mentions experiencing problems: Why do you think that you experienced these problems? (With family, friends, community etc).
6. How did your family and friends react when you were released from prison? (Were they happy, angry, resentful etc.)

7. Were you able to find a job upon release?
 - a. Did you encounter any problems when finding a job?
 - b. Are you working right now?
8. Why did you join the John Howard Society of Toronto?
9. What has helped you enter back into the community?
10. What is your biggest complaint about how the criminal justice system helps offenders reintegrate?

“I am now going to ask you some questions about the way you think other people see you once they know that you have a criminal record. There are no right or wrong answers. Please remember that you don’t have to answer any question that you don’t want to. Also, if you want to end the interview at any point that is fine. You will still receive the \$20.00 compensation no matter what. Please remember that if you choose to end the interview early, all of the information you have provided me with will be removed from the study and destroyed immediately.”

Labeling Theory Questions

11. Some people say that having a criminal record makes people treat you differently. What do you think about this?
12. Do you think that other people see you differently? Do you see yourself differently?
13. Describe the way in which others treat you upon learning about your prison record.
14. How has prison affected your life?

“The questions I will ask you next have to do with the way you see yourself because you have a criminal record. There are no right or wrong answers. Please remember that you don’t have to answer any question that you don’t want to. Also, if you want to end the interview at any point that is fine. You will still receive the \$20.00 compensation no matter what. Please remember that if you choose to end the interview early, all of the information you have provided me with will be removed from the study and destroyed immediately.”

Stereotype Threat Questions

15. Tell me what you think the stereotype of a criminal is?
16. Do you worry about fulfilling the criminal stereotype when you go for interviews?
(For housing, employment, support services, etc.)
 - a. How does your worry affect your performance?
17. Do you worry about how people think of you at times?
 - a. Does this make you nervous or anxious? (i.e. when going for a job interview or applying for housing?)

Consequences of Stereotype Threat Questions

18. Would the fact that you have been to prison stop you from doing something you wanted to do?
19. Have you ever decided not to do something because it meant you would have to tell people that you have been to prison?
20. Have you ever felt like you weren't good enough for something?
 - a. Can you provide an example of this?

“The interview is almost over, but I first I am going to ask you a few questions which kind of sum up the interview. A couple of the questions are personal, and you do not have to answer them if you do not want to. Please remember that you don't have to answer any question that you don't want to. Also, if you want to end the interview at any point that is fine. You will still receive the \$20.00 compensation no matter what. If you choose to end the interview early, all of the information you have provided me with will be removed from the study and destroyed immediately. Also, please remember that there are no right or wrong answers, I just want to know what you think about the question.”

Closing Questions

21. Do you think your life would be different if you had not been to prison?
 - a. In what ways would your life be different?
22. What do you think is the most important thing for an offender to know when he/she is released from prison?

23. How many times have you been to prison?

24. Have you ever been sent back to prison for violating your parole?

“Thank you very much for you time and the answers you provided me with. I really appreciate your participation in my research; I found your answers to be very informative.”